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XBOX HAS
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REVIEWS, XBOX VS. GCN DEBATE, INSIDE NFL FEVER, AND MORE

...ALSO SOME STUFF ABOUT GAMECUBE

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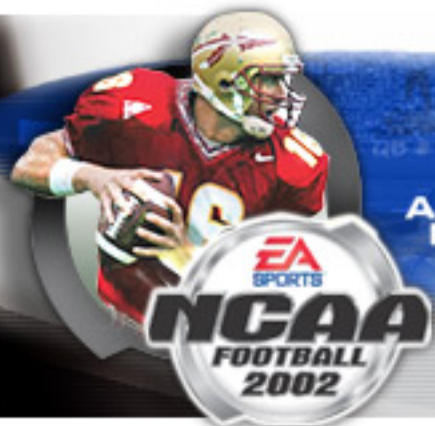
Letter from the Editor ::

Without a doubt, this winter is going to be a good time to be a lay-a-bout waiting to be entertained.

Not only are we going to see the release of two new consoles in November and a bunch of great launch software for each, but it's also the time of the year when publishers release the bulk of their best games. Whether you're a console or PC fan, there's going to be dozens of games released for your system in the next few weeks that you won't want to miss out on.

With the release of *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the movie industry is in full force at this time of year as well. And if you're a homebody, *Planet of the Apes*, *X-Files Season 4*, and *The Sopranos Season 2* DVDs will keep you company on those cold, cold winter nights.

Yes indeed, there's plenty to spend your money on this holiday season, so what are you waiting for? Get off your butt and go do some shopping!

Tal Blevins

– Tal Blevins

:: TABLE OF CONTENTS

EMAIL OF THE MONTH ::

Bonjour,
Aujourd'hui, je me permets de vous solliciter car notre société Stratevent est à votre disposition pour répondre aux demandes événementielles de vos sociétés. Je vous serez reconnaissant de transmettre le texte ci-dessous aux différentes personnes de votre entourage susceptibles d'être intéressées.
Bien à vous et bonne chance pour tout ce que vous entreprenez.

Merci par avance pour votre aide précieuse,
A bientôt,
Arnaud

Xbox ::
Space is the Place
How much space will be allocated to each hard drive feature? Will you be able to use 4gb as a memory card, and leave the other 4 for developers to capitalize on games? Will you be able to use as much of the hard drive as you want for storage, but when it comes down to getting certain features in games, you might not get them, because you don't have enough space on your hard drive?

– Justin

Vincent responds: It doesn't really work like that. First off, the hard drive doesn't actually save all that much game information, it's more about using it as a cache. Save games are still pretty small, though some games take up to 500k per save. Right now I've got about 40 songs on my hard drive, 24 different saves for about 9 games, and it still says I've got 50,000+ blocks of space left. Remember, this is a huge hard drive in terms of gig space, so the only way you'll be filling up your hard drive completely is if you're a music freak with 1000 songs on your Xbox. Even then...

FilmForce ::
Wondering About Wonder Woman
Brian, I grew up watching Wonder Woman in the 70s and in love with the Lynda Carter. If that ugly Sandra Bullock is cast in the Wonder Woman movie, I'll be so disappointed. I can't begin to tell you how much I can't stand her "cutesy" looks. I don't think she's the least bit cute, too plain, and I think she'd make a lousy Wonder Woman. Yuck! Get Lucy Lawless!

– James Butler

Linder responds: James, first of all, you need to get off the crack – Sandra Bullock is hot! Second of all, you're right – I agree that she wouldn't make the best Wonder Woman. She's definitely cute, but too cute to play the lasso-wielding superheroine. The script for this adaptation even calls her "a fierce, focused, terrifying warrior of the night." I can't imagine Bullock as terrifying in the slightest. But, who knows if she'll actually make the cut. Lucy Lawless would be great, but I think an unknown actress might be better. And with all of Hollywood currently in a cost-cutting mode, that just may be the route the production moves in. One of our sources says Jordan Bayne (Poltergeist: The Legacy) may be up for the role.

I'm Not Harry Potter
it me kenneth i'm your 1# fan i'm a boy i like your books there grat book's and your film your so good! good luck harry.

– Kenneth

Linder responds: Well, I know how you feel Kenneth. I'm a boy too, and I'm also a big Harry Potter fan! Unfortunately, for you I suppose, I'M NOT HARRY POTTER! No matter how many articles I write, or how many books I read, I will never be Harry Potter. In fact, Harry Potter doesn't even exist! He's a made-up character. I know this realization might hurt a little now, but I'm saving you years of therapy.

SciFi ::
Dolph Lundren: Renaissance Man
Did you know that Dolph Lundgren has a degree in chemical engineering, and was preparing to go to MIT with a Fulbright (read: very, very prestigious) fellowship for graduate studies before deciding to change careers and go into acting? No joke. I have no idea where you could go to verify this information, as I read it in an article somewhere a while ago. Just thought that this was the kind of tidbit that you wacky writers at IGN like to throw out... and ridicule.

--jc24

Spence D. responds: Yes indeedy, Mr. Lundgren does hold a degree -- it's a Masters Degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. He got this degree in 1982. Prior to his studies in Australia, Mr. Lundgren attended The Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden, as well as studying abroad at both Washington State and Clemson. And, yes, he did get a Fulbright scholarship to MIT in 1983, but on his way there he got sidetracked in NYC and ended up becoming the action star we know and love today.

And just 'cause I'm such a nice guy, here's some additional tidbits for ▶

all the kiddies:
Lundgren has achieved his second degree black belt in Kyokunshinkai karate and he was the winner of the European Heavyweight Full-Contact Karate Championship in 1980 and 1981, as well as the Australian heavyweight division title in 1982. Furthermore, Lundgren served as the Team Leader of the 1996 U.S. Olympic Pentathlon Team.

GameCube ::
Sugar and Spice
I was wondering. What date does the Orange Game Cube gonna come out?

-NGY

Fran responds: The "Spice" (Orange) colored GameCube isn't planned for release in the United States. It will be released in Japan on November 21st. You can, however, buy a Spice colored controller for your US console, which seems to match perfectly with the hypnotizing orange power light.

Luigi's Flicker
Hi guys. Recently saw Luigi's Mansion and I noticed atrocious flickering on mansion windows (during intro). Does 480p eliminate this? How noticeable is the difference?

-Teddy Tse

Fran responds: Progressive scan doesn't really help in that case, because it has to do with texture quality and Nintendo's mip-mapping techniques. It does, however, provide a clearer picture and for some games like Rogue Leader it actually reduces aliasing problems by a lot!

DVD ::
Spawn?
It's been a while since Spawn has been out for DVD. I know there's some pretty decent features on it from your review. I'm ready to buy it but do you see a Special Edition coming out any time soon?

-Chris

Jeremy responds: Despite what some people thought about the Spawn live-action movie, it wasn't completely horrible when it comes down to comic book inspired films. The DVD that is

currently on the market is one of New Line's Platinum Series titles and is packed full of extras including the R-rated version of the film that was released theatrically as a PG-13 flick.

With the current DVD being so good don't expect a new one anytime soon. However, if the rumored sequel to the film ever gets off the ground New Line may consider a new version of disc around the same time that the sequel hits theaters.

Legend is AWOL
Hiya peeps,
Uhh...what the heck happened to Legend? Umm...wasn't it supposed to be out on DVD already. Crap...even Beastmaster (yuck) is out on DVD before Legend...unacceptable :(
Thanks,

-- The Black Wolf

Jeremy responds: How dare you bash Beastmaster! Have you ever seen the lake scene?

As for Legend, the two-disc edition is still on the way, but there isn't a set-in-stone street date as of yet. Keep an eye on the site as this is a title that we are closely watching.

PC ::
In Need of Closure
When did game makers start to believe that it was ok to have a crappy ass ending in their games (red faction, Throne of darkness) I think us gamers should get the word out to them that the ending is just as important as the gameplay. If i go buy a game then beat it and it has a crappy ending what chance does that company have of getting return business from me or the people I tell about the game. "yeah red faction kicked ass except for the horrible ending" wheres the incentive to buy the game and put all the effort intobeating it. The ending is a REWARD not just a few credits and a lame cutscene.

- Lee

Dan responds: You know, I tend to think that as well. I used to love the great endings that games like StarCraft and other older ones like Chrono Trigger for the SNES had. Not only does it give us something for spending the time to finish

the game, but it also seems a bit necessary for closure from something that you just settled down and spent a lot of time with. Of course, it's not like most games in the past had terrific endings, or that all games nowadays don't. StarCraft, No One Lives Forever, Yuri's Revenge, and the Baldur's Gate: Throne of Bhaal endings were all pretty satisfying. It's just too bad everyone doesn't spend more time on these. It just sucks when you win a race and no one's there to cheer.

PlayStation 2 ::
PS2 Network Adapter
When is Sony going to release the Network Adapter for PS2?

-- A guy whose name Dave lost

Dave Z responds: According to the Tony Hawk 3 manual, which goes through Sony's approval, the Network Adapter will not be released until Spring 2002.

Circular Scratch on PS2 Discs
I don't know how it got there, but two of my PS2 games have gotten scratched in the same way -- they have this blue circular scratch around the middle of the disc. Is my PS2 doing this?

-- Another guy whose name Dave lost

Dave Z responds: This problem is most likely due to the powering down of the system with the switch on the back with a disc still in the tray. When you do this, the CD can get scratched when the disc is being spun down. If you want your discs replaced, we suggest you call 1-800-345-SONY. ∎

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SEPTEMBER 2001

release DATES

We've Got Your Back

Pissed off because you didn't get to the store in time to grab the latest version of Sim Peer or Tycoon Tal? Fear not! Just head over to the IGN GameStore and pick up a copy now!

PC Games ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
MechWarrior: 4 Black Knight	simulation	Microsoft	11/01
Wizardy 8	RPG	Sirtech	11/01
Cabela's 4x4 Off Raod Adventure 2	racing	Activision Value	11/05
Etherlords	strategy	Fishtank	11/05
Megarace 3	racing	Dreamcatcher	11/05
AquaNox	action	Fishtank	11/05
Battle Realms	strategy	Ubi Soft	11/06
Elite Forces	action	Xicat	11/06
Deadly Dozen	action	Wizard Works	11/06
Beachhead 2002 XL	action	Wizard Works	11/06
Austerlitz: Napoleon's Greatest Victory	strategy	Strategy First	11/06
Druuna: Morbus Gravis	adventure	Microids	11/06
Tennis Masters Series	sports	Microids	11/06
Kohan: Ahriman's Gift	strategy	Strategy First	11/06
S.W.I.N.E.	strategy	Fishtank	11/07
Microsoft Action Pack	action	Microsoft	11/08
Train Sim Railroad Builder	strategy	Abacus	11/10
Original War	strategy	Virgin	11/12
Star Wars: Galactic Battleground	strategy	Lucus Arts	11/12
Car Tycoon	strategy	Fishtank	11/12
Empire Earth	strategy	Sierra	11/13
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	action	Ubi Soft	11/13
Survivor: The Interactive Game	other	Hasbro	11/13
911: Paramedic	other	Sierra	11/13
Master Rally	racing	Microids	11/13
Gothic	RPG	Xicat	11/13
Comanche 4	simulation	Nova Logic	11/13
The Sims: Hot Date	simulation	Electronic Arts	11/13
Screamer 4x4	racing	Titus	11/13
Star Trek Armada 2	strategy	Activision	11/13
Europa Universalis 2	strategy	Strategy First	11/13
Return to Castle Wolfenstein	action	Activision	11/13
Harry Potter	adventure	Electronic Arts	11/16
Crime Patrol	action	Digital Leisure	11/16
Hooters: Road Trip	other	Ubi Soft	11/20
Combat	action	Hasbro	11/20
IL-2 Sturmovik	simulation	Ubi Soft	11/20

PC (cont.) ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Taylor Made Golf	sports	Xicat	11/20
Moto Racer 3	racing	Infogrames	11/20
Evil Twin	platformer	Ubi Soft	11/27
Demon World	adventure	Xicat	11/27
Dune	adventure	Xicat	11/30

PlayStation ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Syphon Filter 3	action	SCEA	11/06
E.T. Interplanetary Mission	action	NewKidco	11/06
Cabela's Big Game Hunter Ultimate	action	Activision	11/06
Powerpuff Girls: Chemical X - Traction	action	THQ	11/07
Snoopy Adventure	adventure	Infogrames	11/07
Razor Racing	racing	Crave	11/14
Pajama Sam	action	Infogrames	11/14
Cubix Robots for Everyone	action	3DO	11/14
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	adventure	Electronic Arts	11/15
Arc the Lad: Collection	strategy	Working Designs	11/27
Twisted Metal Small Brawl	action	SCEA	11/27

PlayStation 2 ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Max Payne	action	Rockstar Games	11/01
Burnout	racing	Acclaim	11/02
Soldier of Fortune	action	Infogrames	11/05
Half-Life	action	Sierra	11/06
Victorious Boxers	sports	Empire Interactive	11/06
Capcom vs. SNK 2	fighting	Capcom	11/06
SSX Tricky	sports	Electronic Arts	11/06
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	action	Majesco	11/10
Stunt GP	racing	Titus	11/12
Dark Summit	action	THQ	11/12
Driven	racing	bam!	11/12
ESPN NFL Prime Time	sports	Konami	11/13
18-Wheeler American Pro Trucker	action	Acclaim	11/13
Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	sports	Activision	11/13
Wave Rally	racing	Eidos	11/13
Tarzan Untamed	action	Ubi Soft	11/13
NCAA Final Four 2002	sports	SCEA	11/13
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	RPG	Natsume	11/13
Splashdown	racing	Infogrames	11/13
Vampire Night	shooting	Namco	11/13
Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	adventure	Konami	11/13
James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire	action	Electronic Arts	11/13
Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance	RPG	Interplay	11/15
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	adventure	Interplay	11/15
ESPN NBA 2 Night 2002	sports	Konami	11/15
Dynasty Warriors 3	action	KOEI	11/15
Legend of Alon D'ar	RPG	Ubi Soft	11/19
Frogger: The Great Quest	action	Konami	11/19
ESPN Winter Sports 2002	sports	Konami	11/19
WWF SmackDown! Just Bring It	action	THQ	11/19
Frequency	music	SCEA	11/20
Sega Sports NFL 2K2	sports	Sega	11/20
The Simpsons Road Rage	action	Electronic Arts	11/20

PlayStation 2 (cont.) ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Evil Twin: Cyprien's Chronicles	action	Ubi Soft	11/27
Jeremy McGrath's Supercross World	sports	Acclaim	11/27
Legends of Wrestling	action	Acclaim	11/30

Game Boy Advance ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Gadget Racers	racing	Conspiracy Entertainment	11/01
Spongebob Squarepants	platform	THQ	11/06
Jackie Chan Adventures	action	Activision	11/07
Gradius Galaxies	action	Konami	11/07
Super Bust-a-Move	puzzle	Ubi Soft	11/07
Driven	racing	BAM	11/08
Ecks vs. Sever	action	BAM	11/08
WWF Road to Wrestlemania	action	THQ	11/08
No Rules	action	TDK	11/10
Golden Sun	RPG	Nintendo	11/12
Mat Hoffman Pro BMX	sports	Activision	11/15
Harry Potter	RPG	EA	11/15
Breath of Fire	RPG	Capcom	11/16
Powerpuff Girls	action	BAM	11/16
Aerial Aces	action	Majesco	11/16
American Bass Challenge	sports	Ubi Soft	11/16
Lego Racers 2	racing	lego Media	11/17
Wario Land 4	platform	Nintendo	11/17
ET: Extra Terrestrial	action	NewKidCo	11/20
Madden NFL 2002	sports	EA Sports	11/20
Dave Mirra 2	sports	Acclaim	11/20
Hot Wheels: Burnin' Rubber	racing	THQ	11/20
Planet of the Apes	action	Ubi Soft	11/20
Midway's Arcade Classics	action	Midway	11/21
Tom and Jerry	action	NewKidCo	11/22
Star Wars: Jedi Power Battle	action	THQ	11/22
Frogger Adventures	action	Konami	11/23
Jurassic Park 3: Island Attack	adventure	Konami	11/23
Razor Freestyle Scooter	sports	Crave	11/29

GAMECUBE ARRIVES NOVEMBER 18, 2001

GameCube ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	sports	Activision	11/18
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	sports	Acclaim	11/18
NHL Hitz 2002	sports	Midway	11/18
Wave Race: Blue Storm	racing	Nintendo	11/18
Super Monkey Ball	puzzle	Sega	11/18
Luigi's Mansion	adventure	Nintendo	11/18
All-Star Baseball 2002	sports	Acclaim	11/18
Universal Studios Park Adventure	adventure	Kemco	11/18
The Simpsons Road Rage	racing	Electronic Arts	11/18
Crazy Taxi	racing	Acclaim	11/18
Star Wars Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II	action	LucasArts	11/18
Madden NFL 2002	sports	Electronic Arts	11/18
FIFA Soccer 2002	sports	Electronic Arts	11/27

XBOX ARRIVES NOVEMBER 15, 2001

Xbox ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
4x4 EVO 2	racing	Take 2	11/01
Dark Summit	action	THQ	11/12
NASCAR Heat	racing	Infogrames	11/12
Star Wars Starfighter Special Edition	action	LucasArts	11/12
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	sports	Acclaim	11/13
NASCAR Thunder 2002	racing	EA	11/13
The Simpsons Road Rage	action	EA	11/13
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X	sports	Activision	11/13
AirForce Delta Storm	action	Konami	11/15
Cel Damage	action	EA	11/15
Dead or Alive 3	fighting	Tecmo	11/15
Fuzion Frenzy	action	Microsoft	11/15
Halo	shooter	Microsoft	11/15
Mad Dash	racing	Eidos	11/15
Madden NFL 2002	sports	EA	11/15
Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee	action/adventure	Microsoft	11/15
Project Gotham	racing	Microsoft	11/15
Shrek	action	TDK Mediactive	11/15
Transworld Surf	sports	Infogrames	11/12
Amped	sports	Microsoft	11/16
MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	sports	THQ	11/19

DVD ::

(NOTE: SE = Special Edition, UE = Ultimate Edition, CC = Criterion Collection)

TITLE	RATING	DIRECTOR	DATE
Crazy/Beautiful	PG-13	John Stockwell	11/13
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider	PG-13	Simon West	11/13
Osmosis Jones	PG-13	Farrelly Brothers	11/13
X-Files Season 4	NR	Multi.	11/13
Apocalypse Now - Redux	R	Francis Ford Coppola	11/20
Dirty Harry (SE)	R	Don Siegal	11/20
Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas	PG	Ron Howard	11/20
The Matrix Revisited	NR	Multi.	11/20
Willow	PG	Ron Howard	11/27

In Theaters ::

TITLE	STUDIO	DIRECTOR	DATE
Heist	WB	David Mamet	11/09
Shallow Hal	Fox	Farrelly Brothers	11/09
The Wash	Lions Gate	DJ Pooh	11/14
Harry Potter & the Sorcerer's Stone	WB	Chris Columbus	11/16
Novocaine	Artisan	David Atkins	11/16
The Black Night	fox	Gil Younger	11/21
Sidewalks of New York	Paramount Classics	Ed Burns	11/21
Spy Game	Universal	Tony Scott	11/21
Super Troopers	Fox Searchlight	Jay Chandrasekhar	11/30
Texas Rangers	Mirimax	Steve Miner	11/30
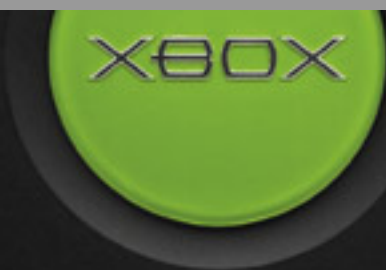
XBOX

IGN ROUNDTABLE

CONSOLE WARS

The editors from IGNcube and IGNXbox go mano-a-mano-a-mano-a-mano in the ultimate GameCube vs. Xbox debate.

We're about to witness an unprecedented event in the annals of videogaming history. This month, two brand-new gaming consoles will be unleashed on the public within three days of each other – Microsoft's Xbox on November 15th and Nintendo's GameCube on November 18th. ▶

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

ROUNDTABLE
CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX   CUBE FRAN | MATT

Naturally both long-standing Nintendo fans and newly hatched Xbox devotees have a lot to say about the strengths and weaknesses of each system, so we sat IGNcube editors Matt Casamassina and Fran Mirabella III and IGNXbox's Vincent Lopez and Aaron Boulding in a room with no food, water, or outside stimulus for five hours and 23 minutes, and here's what we got out of our little experiment...

Moderator: I'm stupid and confused. I've seen both the Xbox and GameCube in action, but I don't know which system to get. Help me choose one over the other.

Vincent: I can't wait to play the GameCube... in about a year, after games like Zelda and Mario Sunshine hit the shelves. But let's be honest here -- the launch is weak. Say what you want about "13 titles at launch!" or whatever, but who buys Nintendo for third-party? I want my hot first party games, and at this point I can wait until at least December when Smash Brothers comes out, or next year when Dino Planet finally delivers.

As for Xbox, there's a handful of reasons to get it at launch, not least of which are DoA3 and Halo, two major titles sure to make my holiday vacation time in front of the fire fun.

Matt: DoA3 and Halo are fine games indeed. I'm going to pick them up for sure. But if I had to choose between them and Rogue Leader, Wave Race and Tony Hawk 3 -- well, it wouldn't be much of a choice for me**.**

The $100 price difference is also something to consider.

Fran: "I can't wait to play the GameCube... in about a year."

Yeah, and I'll be able to afford an Xbox...in about a year. Now, I'm not saying that it's not worth it. An 8GB hard drive, Ethernet capabilities, and a $30 DVD-playback add-on is wonderful. But you know what? BMWs are worth the money too, but not everyone can afford to be so wasteful. For the extra $90 (I'll take $10 off since GameCube requires a memory card) I could have two games.

That's what this is all about too -- the games. I don't want GameCube because it's a brilliant engineering feat (though it is). I want it because of the software. This is where the real decision has to be made -- what games do you want? What games MUST you have?

Let's consider the possibilities:

Wave Race: Blue Storm vs. Project Gotham

I don't care how many cities are in Project Gotham, it's not going to deliver more entertainment than Wave Race: Blue Storm has for me. No one's doing that kind of wave complexity and weather effects and it makes for an amazing game. So, I've got my racing fix well covered on GameCube.

I'M GOING TO BE SICK...

NO, THEY'RE **SUPER** MONKEY BALLS.

Super Smash Bros. Melee vs. Dead or Alive 3

No contest here -- I got three years of great times out of Super Smash Bros. for the N64. And I still would be if it weren't for the release of the sequel, which by all things definable has nearly perfected the franchise. It's about getting together with eight or nine of my best friends and staying up until 4am, biting your lip to keep from screaming and waking up someone in the same house. This is one thing I know that will continue for half a decade whether or not Nintendo releases another sequel during GameCube's lifespan or not. This, however, is not something that will happen with DOA3. Not only because Soul Calibur II will be out next year, but also because I just get tired of that type of fighting.

Star Wars Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II vs. Halo

In this case, I want both games. Halo is an awesome first-person shooter and Rogue Leader is an amazing way to ▶

ROUNDTABLE
CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX   CUBE FRAN | MATT

relive the Trilogy. It's a toss up, honestly. But considering that I already know I MUST HAVE GameCube for the aforementioned games, the choice is already made. I am eagerly anticipating Perfect Dark 2 and Metroid Prime next year for my big FPS thrills.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 vs. Tony Hawk 2X

Rigggggght. Activision is somehow trying to pawn off old games as something new. Admittedly I think the idea of 2X is really neat. If I had an Xbox, I'd get it simply because you can go back to the old games with lush new graphics and create your own updated soundtrack. But, that's all a novelty in comparison to Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3. The new gameplay depth is amazing with the reverts, double tap action buttons, freestyle moves, etc, etc... THPS3 is a superior game, it's that simple. I can't live without it.

I think that's a great start for how I will be occupied over this holiday season. That's why I want GameCube. That's why I suggest GameCube. And if you look into next year with Mario Kart, Legend of Zelda, Mario Sunshine, Resident Evil, Perfect Dark 2, Metroid Prime, Star Fox: Dinosaur Planet, and the whole slew of other titles not announced yet, I know my time will be well spent with GameCube.

Aaron: Maybe it's just the difference between the Xbox and GameCube systems themselves but those comparisons seem a little off.

Let's compare Halo to Armori- I mean Metroid Prime instead of Rogue Leader. With all of the action and awesome features in Halo, Metroid is going to be behind the times when it comes out in 2003 or 2012.

And other than destructible environments I don't see a whole lot of similarities between Super Smash Bros Melee and DOA3. Fran doesn't like "that type of fighting," which I can only assume refers to martial arts. I mean who wants to see spinning roundhouses and vicious flying elbows when you can watch imaginary dinosaurs snag opponents with their tongues, eat them and hatch them into eggs all within a blink of an eye. Gotta love those non-violent fighting games.

I actually like SSBM and I honestly believe it's going to be the game that carries the GC through the holidays. But DOA3 is pushing the boundaries of what we've come to

know and expect of videogames in general and fighters specifically and that kind of progress can't be overlooked.

And that's basically my thought behind the Xbox as a system. We're going to see a consistent run of games on the 'box that are trying to elevate our expectations of videogames as a whole. The technology of the system isn't going to dazzle us beyond next year, but the creative ways it can be applied is reason to give Xbox the benefit of the doubt.

If Nintendo sticks to their formula -- and really with the success they've had there's no reason they shouldn't -- then close-minded GameCube owners will definitely get what they want...and miss out on a lot of equally cool stuff going on with the Xbox.

Oh and Fran try to stay away from sentences like this:

"It's about getting together with eight or nine of my best friends and staying up until 4am, biting your lip to keep from screaming and waking up someone in the same house."

Somebody might get the wrong idea about you.

Fran: I thought it was a simple concept Aaron. You see, there are games available for GameCube during the holiday season and there are games available for the Xbox. Taking what's there, I've compared what people will have the choice of playing on the respective systems. ▶

I'LL STICK THIS WHERE THE MARIO SUN DON'T SHINE!!

I'M TIRED OF ALL YOUR GAMECUBE JIBBER-JABBER!!

ROUNDTABLE CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

WHERE'S YOUR WAVEBIRD NOW, FRAN-BOY?

Personally, I think it's impossible to compare Halo with Metroid Prime, as no one has a clue as to how it will play in the end. If we could make those comparisons, I would have already condemned DOA3 due to Soul Calibur II. Or we could even compare Zelda and Mario with...well, I guess Xbox will never have that kind of software.

And remember that I didn't say DOA3 was bad. I just said I'm going to get tired of it eventually. Just like I got tired of GameCube games like Luigi's Mansion. DOA3 is a great game. Please quote me on that so we don't confuse the issue here. I chose to compare Smash Bros. because it's a fighting franchise that I and five million other people in this world enjoy. That's a heck of a lot more than will ever enjoy DOA3. You can quote me on that too.

And by the way, let's try to keep things on the straight-and-narrow Aaron. That little twist on me playing Super Smash Bros. Melee with my friends is known in the world of logic and fallacy as an "ad hominem" -- attacking the person instead of the issue at hand.

Vincent: Apparently Aaron has shot you in the face with a rifle, Fran -- are you truly suffering that much severe trauma?

No, Gotham is no Wave Race -- Wave Race is arcade racing perfection, whereas as Gotham's an entirely different concept altogether.

Super Smash Brothers? If Power Stone had sold 5 million copies I suppose that would instantly become a "stellar" fighter as well. I can't believe that this comparison is actually going on, it's so ridiculous. A Nintendo mucky muck was playing DOA3 at TGS this year, and I asked him

what he thought -- he shrugged, said "it looks pretty good... but have you played Super Smash Brothers yet?" Yeah. Yeah, I did. It's a great little arcade party game, like how Fuzion Frenzy is a great little party game. It's not a fighting game, and it's certainly not DOA3. It's not even in the same genre. Let's not pump the title up to anything more than it really is.

Soul Calibur II, Fran -- you mean that game that's also coming to the Xbox as well? Right. You keep playing Bloody Roar Extreme, we'll stick to the genre-definer.

As for the price difference, I don't remember anyone complaining about the PS2 price -- other than that they couldn't find the system to throw down the cash on last fall. The Xbox is the same price, with some incredible new addition to the standard console architecture. You can't argue against the amazing $200 price tag for the GC. What you *can* argue about, however, is the lack of titles for launch this fall. So sure, the Xbox is more money. But I don't ever remember buying a console simply because it was cheaper as a kid. I bought it because it had the games I wanted.

Plus, I'm getting a little worried that once again, the GameCube's going to get stuck with fantastic Nintendo platformers, but everyone's kids titles. Sega said in their TGS announcements that the reason Sonic went to GC is that they did market testing, and realized that Nintendo's main market is 14 and under, which matched their primary Sonic demographic. It's also the reason why the Japanese Sonic game now sports Kanji instead of American logos... because Sega said they're using Sonic to appeal to the young gamers (English titles apparently intimidating young kids, according to Sega), and are specifically choosing GameCube because that's its primary market.

Fran: I guess I'm apparently speaking in an undecipherable language. I didn't know we weren't allowed to compare the games that would most closely compete with each other on the market place.

Honestly guys, is it really that confusing? The Xbox touts Halo as its high-action, first-person shooter. So, I therefore compare Rogue Leader because it is an action title with lots of shooting. Same for Smash Bros. Melee and same for Wave Race. I don't know why it's so bloody hard to understand why I chose to compare those games.

What do you want me to say? There is no first-person shooter at GameCube launch. Does that therefore mean ▶

ROUNDTABLE CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

that we cannot compare the Xbox and GameCube software lineup? The here and the now?

Stop backing away from what we're discussing. We're discussing the reasons to buy GameCube or an Xbox. We're not discussing the definition of a "fighting" game.

And no, no one shot me in the face. I'm up for a game of sarcasm, but it seems that both of you are ignoring my point and creating new focal points for this conversation. I just thought I'd bat that down while I could.

Vincent: You'd make a great talking head, Fran -- easy to anger, irritable, sniping... but anyway, I guess we're not comparing game for game here according to Fran, so I suppose we should just stick to generalities.

I didn't buy the PS2 at launch because there just wasn't anything screaming for me to get it. There were a couple of great titles, and a whole bunch of mediocre/average ones. Not enough to sell me on $300. Since Matt pre-ordered an Xbox the day after seeing Halo, let's assume that there's at least one reason to buy the system this fall.

I'm going through the same feelings with the GameCube as I did last year with the PS2. WaveRace is the biggest, most incredible GC game out there for me, but like the PS2 and SSX, I'm not sure it's enough to get me to buy a system. Neither is Smash Brothers, though I know I'll play it and have a blast, as I did the last time around. But if you're talking launch, the cheaper price tag isn't enough to get me to buy a system if I'm going to have to wait six months to find cool enough games to play on it.

It's one thing to defend your system, another to ignore its weaknesses altogether. It's a weak launch guys -- face it. If Tony Hawk 3 didn't come in at the wire, I'd have little interest in it at launch at all.

Aaron: Franboy, I'm pretty sure we're supposed to help the kids pick a console and there are a few billion people in this world who don't wear Nintendo colored glasses and genuinely want to know what's up with each system.

The GameCube is meant to appeal to gamers who like Nintendo's G-rated, fruit flavored brand of fun. Every Resident Evil game ever conceived and all of the RE knockoffs put together won't change the fact that Mario, Zelda and Pokemon are the franchises that will push that system. Games like Madden 2002, Soul Calibur 2 and Tony Hawk 3 are only released for the Cube because their publishers hope that at least a handful of the 8 million ▶

Cube Corner ::
Readers Weigh In

"Excellent, innovative hardware"
GameCube. Why?

The short term reason: I am both a Nintendo fanboy and a Star Wars fanatic. Enough said.

The long term reason: Nintendo always has excellent, innovative hardware design, especially controllers (even the Virtual Boy was well designed. It was the games that sucked). All other consoles use ideas pioneered by Nintendo. More important, GameCube will have the best exclusive games; Eternal Darkness, Mario Sunshine, Perfect Dark 0, and the first Metroid in seven years to name a few. Finally, although it's not likely, there's my hope that Nintendo will get PD0 online (that'll always be the dream).

My advice to people selecting consoles this fall: Don't let anyone else pick your console(s) for you. Choose it yourself, and choose it because it has the games you love to play.

-- Paul Larkins

- -

"I'm broke"
Why would I get a GameCube? Nintendo makes the best games on Earth! I'd rather have one Mario than all the Crash Bandicoots and Oddworlds that the other guys have. I'd rather have one Zelda than... the other non-memorable stuff that's mass-produced like a Britney Spears song on those other systems.

And I'm broke. Can't afford the extra $100 for the other systems. And can't afford extra space for that Xbox-size-of-an-apartment thing...

-- Andrew Yoon

ROUNDTABLE
CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

little tykes that own GC might possibly, one day, maybe, perhaps want to play something that doesn't look and feel like a Saturday morning cartoon.

Take away Rogue Leader --and its beautiful stable of ships from a Star Wars movie that we actually like -- and the GC launch has the same appeal as Hello Kitty and the Muppet Babies.

I just think that the leap in content from the N64 to the GameCube isn't going to be there. Graphically there's no doubt the GameCube can do some outstanding things. But just because in-game Mario is finally going to look as good as Mario on the box art, that doesn't mean you're going to have more fun.

Halo, DOA3, Unreal Championship and Blood Wake are all doing things on the Xbox that we haven't seen before on a console. It's not a system for people who only want to play the franchises they know and are comfortable with. If you want to stick with what you know and see what your favorite videogame characters from your youth look like in 2001, then I'd definitely pick up a GameCube. I think the Xbox is intended to pick up those gamers who feel that they've outgrown their pajamas and Underoos.

Not that there's anything wrong with Underoos, Fran, but you know what I mean.

Fran: Let's look at it this way. Everyone has differing opinions on what kinds of games they like. That's why, as editors, it's tough to say X demographic is going to like game A, B, and C. There are 50-year-old women who play Mario and there are 11-year-old children who play Resident Evil. Demographics are not a fair judge these days. Furthermore, Aaron, how can you say, "Franboy, I'm pretty sure we're supposed to help the kids pick a console," and then subsequently condemn the so-called "G-Rated" games? It seems you're arguing for only the adult crowd, which would be considered biased as you know...

But besides that, everyone superficially presumes that because games like Pikmin feature cute, doll-like creatures that it's not going to deliver a deep gameplay experience. I just feel that's really narrow-minded. The fact is, a game like Pikmin IS delivering a console experience that no others have. It's convenient to say that DOA3 is somehow pushing the boundaries of game development, but it's not doing anything close to what Pikmin is doing for game design. Bringing an RTS to the realm of consoles was a task that no one had done right.

And I really disagree that games like Halo are offering up these amazing, fresh new experiences. Spare me the drama. Halo is a great first-person shooter that's going to be better on the PC if it ever arrives there. It's not like it simplified the FPS control scheme or gameplay mechanics for a more console-friendly gameplay experience. The game is great because the scope of it is so huge, and it's intense. It's an awesome FPS, but it's hardly something that has developers turning heads in jealousy of game design.

But, getting back to the issue at hand. The fact is I get so much enjoyment out of Wave Race: Blue Storm, Super Smash Bros. Melee, Rogue Leader, Pikmin, and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 that I do HAVE to own GameCube. So it's certainly not a "weak launch" for me, and I know millions of others out there who'd agree with that.

I like how you guys are trying to pin me down as a clueless Nintendo fanboy, but the fact is, the aforementioned games are very good. Much better than the PS2 launch. I don't even know how you can try to compare the two. All PS2 had was SSX, and as you full well know SSX Tricky is an afterthought for GameCube and Xbox.

Trying to TELL each other what games we like is futile. I know what I like. You're not going to suddenly put a spell on me where I get more enjoyment out of Halo, DOA3, Munch's Oddysee, Amped and Project Gotham than I would the aforementioned GameCube titles. And I'm sure the same stands vice versa for both of you.

Our readers are going to go through the same things. It's about preference. The question we've been trying to answer is, which platform is more worthwhile?

I detailed why I thought the GCN software was worthwhile in my previous comparison. And as we've pointed out numerous times, you get the system for $100 cheaper. It's a good investment for a game platform. Now and into the future.

Matt: "The GameCube is meant to appeal to gamers who like Nintendo's G-rated, fruit flavored brand of fun. Every Resident Evil game ever conceived and all of the RE knockoffs put together won't change the fact that Mario, Zelda and Pokemon are the franchises that will push that system. Games like Madden 2002, Soul Calibur 2 and Tony Hawk 3 are only ... [etc.]"

Buh? Come on, Aaron -- can you book me a ticket to Fantasy Land sometime? I'd like to see how you live. I mean I honestly don't know what sort of tale your telling yourself -- you and Vincent for that matter -- but just ▶

ROUNDTABLE

CONSOLE WARS

because you've deemed GameCube a "G-rated" system doesn't make it the truth. Capcom knows that, which is why it's thrown the full force of its Resident Evil franchise behind the console. Already gamers are taking notice. The latest Famitsu Readers Most Wanted charts listed both Resident Evil and Resident Evil 0 in the Top 10. Want to know what number one was? Super Smash Bros. Melee. No Xbox titles made it into the Top 30, by the way.

"Take away Rogue Leader -- and it's beautiful stable of ships from a Star Wars movie that we actually like -- and the GC launch has the same appeal as Hello Kitty and the Muppet Babies. "

Someone contact the National Enquirer, here. Could we be any more sensationalistic? And wrong? Probably not, I think. I could easily point to Tony Hawk *3* -- not some crapped out 2X, Madden, FIFA 2002 (Xbox version?), Wave Race, XG3, Hitz and others. I would also submit Pikmin, but evidently in your minds if a game doesn't have a gun in it, it's "G-rated" nonsense. But the fact is GameCube DOES have Rogue Leader at launch, it's a

Xbox Box ::
Readers Weigh In

"A handle!"
The Xbox has a HD. The Xbox has a modem. The Xbox has more adult games. The Xbox has more power. The Xbox has a perfect controller. The GC has...a handle! I will still get a GC though, just not yet.

-- Littlelooch

- -

"My system of choice"
The only reason to choose one system over another is THE GAMES. I choose to purchase an Xbox because I am looking forward to playing the games that will be released for it. DOA3,WWF:Raw is War,Project Gotham Racing,Star Wars:Obi Wan,THPS 2x,NFL 2K2, and now Shenmue II. These are games that I have looked forward to ever since I saw the first screen shots. I can only play one of these games on any other system. Therefore the Xbox will be my system of choice.

-- Morpheus

flagship title to be sure, and as such gamers need to consider that when making a purchase.

"Halo, DoA3, Unreal Championship and Blood Wake are all doing things on the Xbox that we haven't seen before on a console."

Okay. Halo is a 3D first-person shooter. I seem to remember those on consoles before. Unreal Championship is a 3D first-person shooter. Again. Dead or Alive 3 is a 3D fighter -- and part of a franchise, I might add, that has always been considered second best to Soul Calibur, Tekken, and Virtua Fighter. Blood Wake, meanwhile, is Vigilante 8 in water. Now do I think these titles will be good? Yes. Well, some of them. In fact, I'm particularly excited about Halo as I'm a first-person shooter fan. But am I supposed to be falling over myself in anticipation of these alleged groundbreaking, revolutionizing titles? I don't think so. And I know enough about games to see through your sell -- there is nothing pioneering about any of the aforementioned Xbox software.

"I think the Xbox is intended to pick up those gamers who feel that they've outgrown their pajamas and Underoos."

Lord. Must we continue? All right then. I can play the sensationalist game. I guess us youngsters will just have to deal with our kiddie system. But at least it's a console, you know, and not a PC. Heck, why don't you tell everyone what happens the first time you boot up Dead or Alive? A five-minute installation process while it copies to hard drive, that's what. Then the blue screen of death comes up, asks you to reboot, insert "Disc 2" and load new drivers so that the controllers can be recognized. It's a standard process, I hear. Microsoft's "innovation" thus far sure seems to borrow from its Windows-based past. Maybe that explains why the software lineup this year also feels eerily familiar to so many of the PC first-person shooters and simulations I've played -- and grown bored with -- in my early days of gaming.

Can we stop with that now or must we all morph ourselves into rabid fanboys to continue this so-called debate?

Bottom line: I actually like the Xbox, though I do have my reservations. I think the launch lineup is surprisingly good. But the GameCube is more suited to my gaming needs. Smash Bros. Melee, Pikmin, Wave Race, Rogue Squadron, Tony Hawk 3, Madden 2002, Super Monkey Ball, FIFA 2002, Batman Vengeance, Tarzan, All-Star Baseball 2002, Extreme G 3 -- I can get them all this year. I can do it for $100 less. And I can do it with the knowledge that some very interesting software will arrive early next year.

For me, there is no other choice. ▶

ROUNDTABLE
CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

Moderator: Wow, I can literally feel the love here... Okay, I know that it's "all about the games." But humor me for a second, if you will. What about the hardware? You've seen everything from tech demos to finished games and you've seen both consoles hooked up to some pretty swanky TVs and stereo systems. How do Xbox and GameCube compare in terms of graphics, sound, controller design, ease of use, and versatility?

Fran: Let's start by firstly discussing just the basic concepts and design methodology.

Xbox and GameCube are very different in terms of design. That much is blindingly apparent just by looking at the console exteriors.

Xbox is the Incredible Hulk of the gaming world. It's big, it has an overstated case design, it's packed to the brim with everything Microsoft could afford to put in there, and the debug units are even green.

FALCON PUNCH!!!

OW! THE HANDLES STING!

GameCube on the other hand is just the opposite. It's compact, has an extremely simple case design, and has consolidated only the baseline hardware it requires for gaming.

Now, I'll be the first to admit that with the Xbox, you get more bang for your buck. With a built-in hard drive, an Ethernet adapter, and a DVD-movie playback add on its worth $300. That of course doesn't make $300 anymore enlightening for your pocketbook. GameCube is also worth every penny at $200, but you're not going to get as much fluff. The hard drive is the Xbox's biggest novelty.

It's a huge, built-in memory card and you can customize your soundtrack in some games. It also is helpful for game designers who want to reduce load times and have things like updated team rosters. But you know what? Even though I can't design my own soundtrack for Wave Race: Blue Storm, it still provides an amazing gameplay experience. All the extras in the world will not make Xbox games superior. That's up to the designers.

So, just looking at Nintendo's approach to designing GameCube, I can see it is very much my style. Mostly it's just the satisfaction of knowing that with the $100 I save, it's two more games in my pocket than I could afford on the Xbox.

Vincent: Huh. Let's see, by your admission, then Pikmin is just a remake of Command and Conquer and countless other strategy games (Commandos for the PC, anyone?). Wave Race is just racing... on water. I've played a million racing games, so I guess I don't need to play that one. And Luigi's Mansion is just Ghostbusters for the Genesis, only not as fun. Who cares about Goldeneye or Perfect Dark when it would be much better on the PC? Guess I won't even bother ever playing those games, then, no matter how stellar.

That argument doesn't wash, neither does the "crapped out argument" when you guys are literally getting a six year old series of titles that I think the entire world civilization *except* for kids too young to play it the first time around have experienced. Resident Evil 0? Yes. Resident Evil 1-100 as ports? Yawn.

Uh... and Fran, what's that about the hard drive as a glorified memory card? Right -- just like Analog controls were just a "cute" addition to game control. PS2 immediately announced their hard drive because they realized that if nothing else, the Xbox had one amazing feature that no one else had. And you know what? I've heard that Wave Race music, and especially the announcers -- my own soundtrack would be my FIRST option when playing that game. The hard drive changes the way a console fundamentally works. Along with broadband, it means online games that can give you new features over time, it means sustainable online universes that can update themselves to add new areas as the game changes, it means faster load times, custom music, more dynamic audio... not to mention never having to run out of memory room ever again. I've got the entire first party lineup on my hard drive, and about 40 songs, and have yet to have it dip under the "50,000+ blocks available" message. ▶

ROUNDTABLE
CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

Matt: Vincent, you're right about Pikmin. It's not a new idea. Nor is Wave Race. Or Luigi's Mansion. But then, I never said they were. I merely protested Aaron's argument that Xbox's lineup was somehow pioneering something new for the gaming industry.

As far as overall hardware design goes, it's a tough one. Both are very powerful machines. Neither is perfect.

GameCube is, in my mind, an engineering feat. It's just so small, clean, and efficient. It's by all accounts just as powerful as Xbox in almost every gaming-related area but it's $100 cheaper.

It has been called "Texturezilla" by the tech-savvy because of its ability to process and display some of the most detailed, breathtaking textures -- sometimes at 512x512, as is the case in much of Rogue Leader. The 1T-SRAM is blazing fast and allows developers to swap data through the pipeline with a brutal speed, which in turn often saves on framerate fluidity in software. The CPU is fast enough to keep up with the graphics hardware. It's all just very well rounded, very well thought out, and designed to meet the needs of gamers from day one.

Xbox has its technical advantages and disadvantages, I believe. For one, it's got 64MBs of RAM. Ask any developer and they'll tell you that's a godsend of sorts. Heck, developers will always want more, but still -- what a difference. Secondly, it's equipped with impressive graphics hardware and a solid CPU.

The per-pixel lighting is quite nice. And the hard drive of course rocks the house. I'm super jealous of that as a GameCube advocate.

On the other hand, I've heard stories that the developers have run into serious fill-rate issues with the machine and given the nature of its universal memory architecture -- remember the N64? -- I'm not surprised. Bear in mind that most of my sources are on the Nintendo side, but I still talk with some pretty knowledgeable people. If there is even a hint of truth to their claims, the Xbox may have its share of software with less than impressive framerates in the future. Its flagship title, Halo, runs at 30 and sometimes less whilst Rogue Leader runs at 60 / 30 and draws environments with greater geometry (not to mention every texture effect in existence), in my opinion. There's bound to be some differing thoughts on that though.

In the end, I don't see a clear winner. Many are under the belief that Xbox is a far more powerful system than GameCube. I am not. Sorry -- it's just not true. I think the two will perform roughly the same in the end. I think Xbox may have the advantage -- technically and visually -- with games that are slower paced and in restricted environments, I think GameCube's 1T-SRAM and neatly orchestrated system design will pull through in fast-action ▶

IT PUSHES 300 MILLION MICRO-POLYS PER SECOND!

NOOOOOOOOO!!

ROUNDTABLE CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE **FRAN | MATT**

scenarios with wide-open environments. I think the framerates, ultimately will be slightly better. But truly and for sure, at the end of the day it depends on the development studio more than it does the hardware.

So far as controllers are concerned -- no contest. The Xbox controller is one of the worst joypads I've ever had the misfortune to grip. It's too big, it's too clunky -- it's not comfortable in the least. I don't like it and I'm eagerly awaiting the arrival of some third-party variation.

The GameCube controller, on the other hand, is probably my favorite ever created. Not just because I cover Nintendo, but because it's intuitively designed, smart, and feels absolutely great in the hands -- it just clicks. Literally, in fact. Try using the L and R triggers and you'll understand what I mean. But even this pad isn't perfect. The Z-trigger is pointless, in my opinion, and the D-pad is too small for my liking; it feels like an afterthought, which is a shame.

Fran: Vincent, you are totally taking my points out of context and somehow deluding yourself into thinking Xbox titles are actually doing something GameCube software isn't.

Let me reiterate my point, loud and clear. I disagreed that games like Halo were doing stuff for the console world that we'd never seen before. So, my example with Pikmin is that you can now actually play a unique RTS on the console. As far as consoles are concerned, I think Pikmin does push boundries.

What about other GameCube software? Not really, I totally agree that Wave Race: Blue Storm, Rogue Leader, and Super Smash Bros. Melee are really just next-generation version of their counterparts. But, they're built on concrete foundations. These games were good the first time around and the next-generation versions aren't getting less entertaining. They're good games. They're just not groundbreaking.

And it's the same with Xbox titles. This is where you're delusions come in: "You guys are literally getting a six year old series of titles that I think the entire world civilization *except* for kids too young to play it the first time around have experienced." Please, spare me. DOA3 is just DOA2 with bigger environments and pretty graphics. I don't see how that's somehow different than Super Smash Bros. Melee versus the original.

That doesn't make the GameCube launch weak. In fact, I think it makes it great because it's a good crop of games. If it's not broken don't fix it. I want the big titles like

Mario Sunshine and Legend of Zelda as much as anyone else, but they'll be good next year. What will Xbox users have to turn to next year?

As for the Xbox hard drive being a "glorified memory card," I think it's a great addition, especially for the extra $100. I was just suggesting that right NOW it's not something that's improving gameplay. Ever heard of the 64DD? Yea, Nintendo had this great idea too -- track editors, download games, etc, etc. It's a nice thought, but if developers don't actually put it to use then what good is it? Xbox hard drive is good, but it won't be great until developers start to use it for more than soundtrack upgrades. Hopefully Project Ego will pan out, there's a game that puts it to good use.

Now for my technical rant. Is Xbox more powerful than GameCube or vice versa?

Neither is drastically more powerful than the other. We can argue until the death about supposed specs, but the truth is both systems are equally capable of putting out very pretty games. We've see Halo and Rogue Leader, so there's no wondering if they're powerful machines. ▶

Cube Corner ::
Readers Weigh In

"It melts in your hands"
This coming November I shall be purchasing a GameCube. Why? Well, for starters, the price. I am a college student, and as such, I have to pay for books, school, etc. So, the GameCube fits my budget much more nicely. I have also come to depend on Nintendo systems for their exclusives. Franchises such as Mario, Zelda, Donkey Kong, Wave Race, and Metroid, I cannot do without. No other system will have thses games, plus countless others, so the GameCube is the way to go. The controller is also another big selling point. I have know used all three next gen controllers, and must say that the Nintendo controller is far superior to any other. It just melts in your hands, and you forget it is even there. That is the mark of a great controller. Nintendo is poised to to please a lot of gamers this holiday season, and I aim to be one of them.

--Ryan Morris

ROUNDTABLE CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

But, if I had to pick what hardware had a better design it'd be GameCube, hands-down. Have you seen the motherboard? It's almost as clean as the exterior. That minimalist appearance hides what lies beneath the surface.

As Matt mentioned, the way the system works is actually quite brilliant. The 24MB of 1T-SRAM is not to be confused with your everyday RAM. It is the key to the entire system, in fact without it GameCube would have a lot of trouble living up to its theoretical performance. Thankfully, this stuff is lightning fast, letting developers pull data constantly without dropping cycles very often, thus keeping the framerate high, among other things.

And the graphics chip has 3MB of embedded 1T-SRAM. It represents about 50% of the transistors, half of what's there and there's good reason for that. It lets you rip textures through there at unbelievable speeds. It works with the architecture to give the chip an unprecedented ability to blend textures, multilayer textures and keep up performance. Rogue Leader, believe it or not, is just the beginning. Second-generation stuff is going to be even more breathtaking.

I think that's where Xbox lacks. It's 64MB UMA (unified memory architecture) is just a bad idea for home consoles. The setup is very much akin to a PC, but just has a fast 6.4GB/s bus. That's great, but I think it's going to cause a lot of problems. You have the graphics chip, CPU, and sound chip all sharing the same "garage" so to speak. Putting too much traffic though there is going to cause trouble. The N64 shared the same type of philosophy, and it was the bane of developers' existences.

This brings up one of my biggest issues with the Xbox design. Microsoft really pieced this thing together like a PC. The CPU is a standard Intel chip. The graphics chip is really just based off of the GeForce 3, an architecture designed for the PC. I mean, in the end it worked for Microsoft, they got a system out there fast and it gets the job done quite nicely. But I know the company is taking some big hits to its pocket book because of the sloppy design.

Fortunately all this is transparent to the videogamer. What you see is what you get on the TV screen. So far GameCube and Xbox look great. I won't dispute that.

What isn't so transparent to the videogamer is the controller. Sorry guys, but you're crazy if you think the Xbox controller is designed better than GameCube's. Nintendo's philosophy: design a controller that players get so used to they forget they're holding it. Microsoft's

philosophy: make it big, bad, and as American as possible. I just honestly see no design elements there that make the gaming experience more intuitive. That's something that GameCube's controller has going for it. It's really comfortable to hold and the button layout is innovative. Using the four face buttons is almost as easy as using a D-pad. You just don't get lost. Speaking of which, that's my only issue with the GameCube controller -- the D-pad. It's too bloody small. Fortunately, it's not something one uses a lot in next-generation games.

As far as I'm concerned, the Xbox controller is trash. It's ridiculously bad and should have never made it to production. Even after playing DOA3 for like two hours, I still felt awkward holding it. Pray for the release of the smaller Japanese controller, and with any luck third-parties will make a better controller, which is usually the opposite of what happens. That's just how bad the controller is.

It's the physical link to the gaming experience, and Microsoft totally screwed it up.

Aaron: I guess this hardware comparison is the part where I'm supposed to hype up the Xbox technical credentials, but I'm afraid I'll end up sounding too much like Fran.

The aesthetic beauty of the GameCube's motherboard? Are you kidding me? I mean , I know the GameCube is perfect in every way to fans, but that's really overdoing it.

You complain about the Xbox's architecture as being too much like a PC, but that's not necessarily a negative. I'll admit that the Xbox probably isn't the most efficient console, but as you suggested this thing has gone from idea to reality in record time. Mocking Microsoft because their solution was to just load the Xbox with plenty of raw horsepower and processing speed doesn't mean that gamers are going to suffer, as you suggest. It's no mistake for MS to mitigate its lack of gaming experience by relying heavily on its strengths --plenty of cash and plenty of partnerships-- to put out a strong console.

But let's talk about the hardware shall we? Even at $299 --and yes Microsoft is taking a huge hit on each unit-- you're getting a lot of value out of the Xbox as a piece of gaming hardware. By your own admissions, Matt and Fran, the Xbox can do some nice looking games, so then doesn't DVD movie playback, an 8GB hard-drive (regardless of what it is or is not used for) and the ability to rip your own music into select games add an awful lot to the Xbox? Yeah I know GameCube is totally focused on games but that's really because Nintendo has no choice. The big N is so worried about piracy that they broke the bank to come up with a propietary disc format that little ▶

ROUNDTABLE
CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

Xbox Box ::
Readers Weigh In

"I know one idiot…"
I think that Xbox is the best gaming system this gen. Here are my reasons:

Hardware- Xbox has the most built in features out of all the next gen systems. It has buit-in HDD and Ethernet. And many of the PS2 fans argue that the PS2 will also have a HDD add-on. Key word there, add-on. Its gonna be expensive and may developers aren't gonna take full advantage of its capabilities unless it is extremely popular. And looking at the Japanese sales, doesn't look like its gonna gain any popularity here. Also, many GC and PS2 fans complain that the Xbox has no 56k support. That is a good feature I think. If you everybody is at the same speed there will be no lag. And we all know how much we hate lag.

Controller- I don't care what others say. I think the Xbox controller is one of the best. Why it may be big for others. It fits me perfect. And I hate it when people say they can't get a Xbox because the controller is so big. Bullshit. Get a 3rd party controller that is smaller. I mean c'mon, who would actually not buy a system because of a controller? I know one idiot, but I will leave his name out. ***COUGH-blink182ska-COUGHCOUGH***

Microsoft- I keep hearing people compare this to the Jaguar or 3DO. "Oh, it will last a couple months at most." "Its gonna be as big as 3DO." " I ain't putting my money in a system that is already dead." (That's my favorite) HELLO!!! This is Microsoft were talking about here. The worlds richest company. I doubt they are gonna let this just die out. They have already put millions into this, and they aren't just gonna kill it off within the 1st year. Duh!

Games- This is my last reason because I believe that every system has great games. It's your opinion if you don't like Xbox because of its games. Right now, Xbox just has more for my tastes as a 16-year-old. GC is awesome but at launch there aren't a whole lot of action based games that interest me. That is why I am getting a Xbox, because the launch games appeal to me more than the GC launch line-up.

You should merely buy systems based on your own opinions. I just hope this showed you the good side of the Xbox.

- CaseyCobler14

Hiro and little Timmy can handle with ease and they consciously ignored DVD movie playback, a proven feature that Sony, Microsoft and millions of gamers believe adds value to their gaming machines.

Xbox is just intended to deliver a different kind of fun to gamers. Wonderful rainbow-mushroom adventures is one kind of fun. Busting donuts on a widescreen TV listening to your own custom soundtrack in Project Gotham Racing is another. Gaming fans are going to get the machine that allows them to have the kind of fun they want the most.

Moderator: Okay, so even though you don't all agree, it's obvious that both the Xbox and GameCube are powerful machines, but what about the software? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the launch titles for both systems? What about specific genres? Are there are any genres that are lacking on GameCube, but strong on Xbox -- or vice versa? And how's future software support looking?

Vincent: I think one of the major advantages to the Xbox is the strong launch selection, which manages to cover nearly every genre, and does it well. Party games, sports, snowboarding, surfing, first person shooter, fighting games and even a platformer for launch? And not one of them miserable? That's an incredible start. Not every game is incredible, but a surprising amount are, at the very least, above average, and certainly better than most system's launch crop. The GameCube, on the other hand, has in some ways a weaker launch than even the N64. Tony Hawk 3 is a big one, but there's little else high profile enough to push the system into gamer's hands. Rogue Leader, for all its beauty, is still to much like the other Star Wars starfighting games on other console systems (despite its beauty) to truly make people go out and buy a system for it. And honestly, I (and pretty much everyone else) bought the Nintendo, the Super Nintendo, and the N64 for one reason and one reason only -- the latest, and greatest Mario title. They've always been the major reason to get the latest system when there's been little else at launch. The N64 would have been dead in the water without it, and the GC launch will suffer because of it. When you build a system on rehashed franchises from 1983, then you better provide those franchises from the get go or people are gonna get miffed.

Fran: "Rogue Leader, for all its beauty, is still to much like the other Star Wars starfighting games on other console systems (despite its beauty) to truly make people go out and buy a system for it."

Okay Vincent, let me try being narrow minded for a moment: "[DOA3], for all its beauty, is still too much like ▶

ROUNDTABLE CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

the other fighting games on other console systems (despite its beauty) to truly make people go out and buy a system for it."

Hmm, I'll have to remember that technique, I think I'll name it "fanboyism." I'm sorry, but have you even played Starfighter, for instance? It's a joke compared to Rogue Leader.

Anyhow, we've been over this. Everyone has their own preferences for game types, and we're not going to change each other. But, I will say that Nintendo is going to sell a truckload more software than Microsoft, because there's a lot of people out there -- and you guys might want to sit down for this, it's a big surprise -- that get a heck of a lot more enjoyment out of games like Super Smash Bros. Melee, Wave Race: Blue Storm, and Rogue Leader than they will out of Xbox software.

What exactly are GameCube's strengths with the launch titles? I think it's the fact that the launch library is stronger than Nintendo has ever had. Just because SSB Melee, Wave Race: Blue Storm, Rogue Leader, and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 are built on existing franchises I don't see how that suddenly makes them "old news," or "rehashes." They're all great games. Would it make you feel better Vincent if we replaced the Nintendo characters with big-breasted women and chiseled studs? Would that keep it from being a "rehash," because by your definition DOA3 should be just that. Which is apparently...a bad thing?

GameCube's launch weakness is definitely its lack of one killer title. The N64 had Super Mario 64, which redefined gaming, and GameCube has nothing of the sort yet. Nintendo is milking the market and taking its sweet time developing its big titles like Mario and Zelda, and this has created a launch that we're just not used to from Nintendo.

They're also missing a really good platform title at launch, which is always the market Nintendo owns. If Mario Sunshine was a launch title, that would have completely redefined the landscape.

GameCube's future software is amazing. Moving past launch, into next year players can expect Mario Sunshine, Legend of Zelda, Metroid Prime, Mario Kart, Perfect Dark 2, Resident Evil, Kameo: Elements of Power, Donkey Kong Racing, Star Fox Adventures: Dinosaur Planet, Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem, Duke Nukem Forever, Galleon: Islands of Mystery, Die Hard, Turok Evolution, Pokemon, and so many more. I don't know about you, but that's a great lineup to look forward to. And even past

that I know I can count on the great first-party and second-party software from Nintendo.

It means that plunking $200 for GameCube is a good investment. I want to know and I'm sure our readers do, what guarantee do we have that next year that $300 Xbox investment is going to pay off? And why is it going to pay off better than GameCube, which has blockbuster titles like Zelda?

Matt: The software for both systems at launch and in the weeks after is impressive, I would think.

MATE, DAMN YOU! I WANT MY X-CUBE!

On GameCube you've got Rogue Leader, Super Smash Bros. Melee, Pikmin, Tony Hawk 3, Wave Race, Madden, FIFA, Tricky, Batman Vengeance, Tarzan and others like Luigi's Mansion and Super Monkey Ball. I believe 13-15 GCN titles will ship at launch and 25 by the end of the year. This is a solid lineup to be sure and to call it anything otherwise -- "weak"? -- is just ignorant. And you know, I realize that not everybody is into the Nintendo thing, but to overlook Pikmin and Super Smash Bros. as amazing additions to Rogue Leader would not be wise. They look great, they play fantastically and they will sell systems.

With that noted, I'm disappointed that Nintendo hasn't delivered us the mind-blowing Mario title at launch. Luigi's Mansion is a fun enough romp while it lasts, but it's not a flagship piece. Instead, GameCube buyers are forced to wait. Also, if GameCube is lacking at start in any one ▶

CONSOLE WARS
ROUNDTABLE

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

genre, it's the RPG. No big surprise, yes?

Xbox's launch lineup is surprisingly more intriguing than I initially thought it would be. Halo is a must-have for me. I think it's definitely going to be a lot of fun. Dead or Alive 3 doesn't suit me, but I realize it's a visual stunner and is bound to touch fighting fans in the right spot. And Abe's Oddyssee looks decent enough, though in my admittedly limited experience it's nothing to write home about. Finally, Fusion Frenzy is looking to be an addictive little mutliplayer bash. Transworld Surf, Amped and Mad Dash, meanwhile, haven't impressed me, and NFL Fever looks like it's going to fall to Madden despite a commendable start.

I actually pre-ordered an Xbox with Halo, Abe and Fusion Frenzy. Beyond those three titles, I'm not terribly interested so far. Most of the remaining lineup is third-party related stuff that I can pick up on GameCube and play with a better controller.

I'm somewhat baffled then that Vincent can knock GameCube's lineup and praise Xbox's. I'm a reasonable guy here. I just admitted that I like both systems and am in fact going to purchase an Xbox upon release. But evidently I'm missing something that our Xbox guys are seeing as I'm not compelled to play any other software on the system yet.

Looking to the future, I think the battle will definitely be more brutal. GameCube is going to come out swinging in 2002 with such titles as Legend of Zelda, Mario Sunshine, Metroid Prime, Turok 4, Perfect Dark 2, Resident Evil,

Resident Evil 0, Dinosaur Planet, Eternal Darkness, Mario Kart, Galleon, Kameo and Soul Calibur 2 (which won't be on Xbox 'til 2003). There are a number of other very important titles scheduled to hit the console next year that I can't yet talk about and probably others that I know nothing about.

I'm not even sure what's going to be big next year for Xbox. Tony Hawk 3 online will be nice. The game will have been available for PS2 and GameCube for three months, meanwhile. Project Ego should be big. Sega's Jet Grind Radio Future looks promising. Likewise for Crazy Taxi Next. And ditto for Unreal Championship. But Blood Wake? Enclave? I guess.

Frankly though, I don't see that lineup as something that even comes close to comparing with Nintendo's big-name franchises next year. Is anybody in their right mind going to walk into a retailer and choose Blood Wake over Mario Sunshine? Or Jet Grind Radio over Legend of Zelda? No offense, as I think they'll all be pretty solid entries, but I don't think so. Then, maybe I'm wrong. I don't know.

Moderator: What about online and multiplayer gaming? How does each system stack up?

Vincent: Well in that regard, I don't think there's a comparison. Microsoft has an online launch in March, with one announced game (Unreal Championship) and some secret first and third party titles in the works, and is using its background in the online industry to provide a backbone for some cool online gaming. Here's one department that Microsoft knows inside and out from its dealings with everything from Hotmail to MSNBC.com.

Nintendo's got Phantasy Star Online... but hasn't really even touched the online industry, in any way. Not even like Sony, which has made announcements only to keep quiet when it's come time to deliver. I don't really see Nintendo focusing on online at all, frankly – it's just not their market, and really not that big of a deal to them.

For Microsoft, I think it's a risky niche that they're really trying to nail before any other console does. Will it pay off? Who knows. But Microsoft has the money to risk it, at least.

Fran: Nintendo's online future is about as clear as mud. The only announced online title is Phantasy Star Online and that's third-party. So I definitely think Nintendo's online plan is weak. Do they have a plan? Who knows? But Jim Merrick, who helped manage the design of the GameCube hardware is now dedicated to an online strategy.

Supposedly he's working hard with Nintendo of Japan to ▶

LET'S GO FOR A WALK, BUDDY.

ROUNDTABLE
CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

come up with a profitable, effecient online solution. But that's Nintendo's problem. They will not do anything or take any risks unless there's money to be made. So far, few have proven how online console gaming can be a profitable market. I think that's where Xbox has a good advantage. Microsoft is going to burn a lot of money to try to make online gaming work. And they're going to do it sooner than anyone else.

As far as multiplayer gaming, Nintendo has traditionally done a good job of supporting this. Right out of the gate we'll have Wave Race and, more importantly, Super Smash Bros. Melee -- both are excellent multiplayer games. From third parties it will have Super Monkey Ball, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Extreme G 3, FIFA 2002 and All Star Baseball 2002. And of course both GameCube and Xbox will have Madden 2002, NHL Hitz 2002, SSX Tricky, and some others.

Meanwhile, I think the Xbox has some killer multiplayer titles like Halo (networking for multiplayer rules), DOA3, Fusion Frenzy, and Project Gotham.

All things considered, I would want both systems for multiplayer stuff. On the one hand I can't live without Super Smash Bros. Melee, but on the other Halo is hugely fun.

Matt: Fran's right. Nintendo's strategy is undefined, unannounced, and highly secret. Typical of the company.

I'm sure some fine things are brewing there, but obviously Nintendo isn't going to be the one that pioneers home console online gaming. The firm is not about gambling, and it sees no profits in an online network as of yet. Perhaps after Microsoft and Sony pave the way it will follow. But I don't see it happening any time soon. And when it does, I would think Nintendo would be playing catch-up with its competitors for a long while.

Personally, I'm disappointed by Nintendo's textbook-like conservatism. If it was up the company, all games would still be made on proprietary cartridges, memory cards would allow five saves each and the modem would be abolished. Thank the heavens that its competitors force its participation and subsequent evolution.

Aaron: I don't really know what I nor the public wants from online console gaming. Is Tony Hawk 3 going to be more fun when it's online? Do I really want to play an online deathmatch FPS with the Xbox controller? These questions have to be answered first and I think Microsoft is running a strong race to come up with those answers

Cube Corner ::
Readers Weigh In

"The Cube just surprises me."
Well, I'm going with the GameCube because I've grown up with Nintendo. The "Cube" just surprises me. It has a cheap price compared to the N64 (that was expensive up here in Canada), and compared to PS2 and the upcoming Xbox.

The games are what has me most interested. Nintendo never (really) lets me down in this department. They have a good second party line-up also. I know I'll be able to play my Perfect Darks, and Zeldas, and so on. People complain that Nintendo is a kid's machine. I'm 19 and it feels good to be a kid. And this is the feeling I get when playing Nintendo. We were happiest as kids, were we not?

Another argument is that the controller and the console itself is a lot smaller in size compared to the Xbox. I'll be able to fit in my
GameCube between my SNES, N64, and Dreamcast on one self? Put the Xbox in there and the whole system has gone to hell. I know this is longer than a paragraph, but I prefer the GameCube. If I wanted the games that Xbox is coming out with I'll get a PS2. Thank you!

-- Jasen1981

first. I do know that streamlining the process from buying the software, to paying for online access to actually hopping into an online multiplayer game is of the utmost importance. MS's experience in this area will be priceless if and when the question of "why?" is answered.

As far as multiplayer gaming on the Xbox, that's not even an issue. We've all seen first hand the sweaty fingers caused by four player sessions of DOA3 and Fuzion Frenzy. Throw in the full complement of sports games and the 'box is looking just fine. And you cannot underestimate the significance of Halo's network play. Look at the hoops you have to jump through if you want to play Gran Turismo 3 with your buddy on two PS2's and two TVs. With Halo you can link two Xboxes to each other with a garden variety Ethernet cable and you're good to go. If you have access ▶

ROUNDTABLE
CONSOLE WARS

AARON | VINCENT XBOX

CUBE FRAN | MATT

to a network, your multiplayer gaming is only limited by the number of controllers and Halo disks you have.

Moderator: Okay, so after all of this, I'm still stupid and confused. Sure, gamers who have the cash should get both consoles – but what if I can only get one machine. Wrap it up for me, please. Why should I get the Xbox? Why should I get the GameCube?

Fran: I think our "passionate" discussion here says it all. Everyone has their own preferences. I don't know why I like Super Smash Bros. Melee better than DOA3, I just do. There are going to be people who are more drawn to Halo than Rogue Leader or Pikmin. Who are we to say that's a bad thing?

The truth is, both systems have a great set of titles. I think you should get a GameCube if you're a fan of Nintendo games. They seldom have produced a terrible game. Even when they mess up their titles are still good by most standards. That means you can depend on it because it has a solid future. You've seen all the titles we've listed including Mario Sunshine, Legend of Zelda, Metroid Prime, Pokémon, Perfect Dark 2 and all the others. These are great things to look forward to and so many unannounced titles as well.

I'm one of these people. I'm a Nintendo fan. I would buy GameCube just for Super Smash Bros. Melee. The decision makes itself.

Beyond that, there's no clear definition as to why you should buy one or the other. I suggest that readers make a list of the titles they want most on each system. In all likelihood, one system is inevitably going to have more games that you want. This is where the real decision is made. We've told you what games are great. Now it's time for you to decide.

Vincent: Unfortunately, my answer is the one that no-one wants to hear: get what you want.

This is the greatest year in gaming possibly ever, with three systems each providing unique and cool gaming experiences. The solution is to go with the games you want. Halo has me totally hooked in a way that I haven't been since Zelda: The Ocarina of Time. It's a different game, but I feel my life sucked away as we speak. It's an epic space opera that's as close to playing an amazing James Cameron action film as you can get. But maybe to someone else, Monkey Ball is what they've been dreaming of. It's really all about what catches your eye.

Sorry, but that's the truth.

IT'S A BIRTH DEFECT.

Aaron: The truth is the only reason we're having this Xbox vs. GameCube discussion is because they're arriving within days of each other, a nice natural conflict. Both Microsoft and Nintendo will tell you that they're aiming for different slices of the videogame market and they've positioned their machines to do just that. Nintendo is going to deliver the kind of gaming they've always delivered, it's just on a new console. If you liked what you got on the N64, then GameCube won't let you down.

Xbox however will open things up as a new player in the world of videogames and this cannot be underestimated. Sega, through two disappointing systems, delivered some marvelous new ideas and innovations and we've already seen Microsoft has that same kind of ambition. As a gaming company they're going to continue to make mistakes and stumble, but they've proven that they can correct and learn from those mistakes. Plus, MS has the scratch to withstand those kind of growing pains.

The system is no more expensive than the PS2. Xbox games cost the same as everybody else's. They've got a handful of sure bet five star games on the way. Consumers who are considering taking a chance on the new kid have been given as many reassurances as a Microsoft can give. So there's nothing left to do except stop all of the hand-wringing, nay saying and sniveling and pick up an Xbox.

Matt: Snocaca! *makes fart noises with his mouth and stares off into space until everyone is allowed to leave the room, some five hours later*

– IGNcube / IGNXbox ∎

STAR WARS® ROGUE LEADER
ROGUE SQUADRON. II
BECOME THE JEDI

For years gamers have wanted to become Luke Skywalker and fly an X-wing into space combat – now they can. We go hands-on with Luke, Han, and Red Leader.

Once Upon a Time…

At Space World 2000, Nintendo finally unveiled its next-generation GameCube console along with a handful of "technical demos" that would later be announced as real games. One of those titles was an early version of Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader, the next in LucasArts and Factor 5's action-shooter franchise.

The demo drew "oohs" and "aahs" from those who saw its graphic splendor as a single X-wing did battle with hundreds of TIE Fighters over the Death Star. It was an impressive display to be sure, but it was only the beginning of things to come.

Fast forward… After more than a year of hard, dedicated work, Rogue Leader is finally finished. By the time you read this, it will have just hit retail shelves. Take the next few minutes to read our gameplay impressions of the complete game then kindly put the magazine down, run to the nearest videogame store, and buy Rogue Leader. You'll thank us for it later.

No Jar Jar in Sight

Factor 5 is no stranger to Lucasfilm's Episode I: The Phantom Menace. In fact, the studio created Star Wars Episode I: Battle for Naboo – an N64 action-shooter that revolved around the over-hyped prequel. But going into GameCube development, another game featuring the abomination Jar Jar Binks – the annoying side character in The Phantom Menace – just didn't feel right. So instead, LucasArts and Factor 5 turned to the holy trilogy.

Movie/Game Comparison

GAME

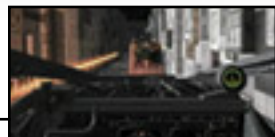**MOVIE**
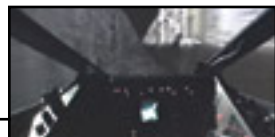
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NINTENDO
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STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
ROGUE SQUADRON. II

The Trilogy

Rogue Leader follows the stories of Luke Skywalker and Wedge Antilles – leaders of the Rogue Squadron – as they do battle with the Empire. The game situates players in the cockpits of various Star Wars ships, from the X-wing and A-wing to the Millennium Falcon, and then it's blasting time.

Detailed cockpit

The title can be played in either third-person view or from inside the cockpit. Factor 5 has accurately modeled the cockpits uniquely for every ship in the game using a ridiculous amount of polygons. Players can, with the controller's camera stick, actually look around inside the cockpit to see a series of blinking lights and display screens, or pan left to right out of the windows as they speed by a location. The sensation is eerily realistic, we can tell you.

Because Rogue Leader closely follows the Star Wars trilogy, gamers will recognize more than a few sights in the title. The first level is a training mission that takes place over the deserts of Tatooine. It's here that everything about flying the ships can be learned, from closing the wings on an X-wing to firing lasers at creatures on the surface. The scope of the planet, like every other in the game, is immense – and indisputably beautiful. Gamers can see a shimmering heat on the sands below, and if they fly closely to the ground, the texture detail will increase to reveal photo-realistic lined patterns.

The Levels

The training mission is good and fine, but what about action? Rogue Leader doesn't wait to throw players right into it. The first real level in the game is called Death Star Attack, and it's exactly that. As Luke Skywalker, gamers must fly an X-wing over the mighty Death Star and shoot down an army of TIE Fighters, all of whom are bent on executing the Jedi. It's a scene like no other, overflowing with motion, lasers, flying ships and explosions. And it gets even more intense, for if Luke can successfully take out the TIEs, gamers will find themselves flying directly into the trench run scene from the movie. "Use the force, Luke," Obi-Wan can be heard saying as Darth Vader chases players from behind, shooting at them.

Light it up

The next level in the game, Ison Corridor Ambush, takes players into a space battle complete with flying debris and nebula clouds. TIEs zoom in and out of a space mist so thick it can't be seen through, and gamers will be forced to use their ship's targeting display more than once just to spot enemy fighters, let alone shoot them down. Additionally, because the clouds are volumetric, they vary in density and look almost real, but most importantly they

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
ROGUE SQUADRON. II

The Ison Corridor

become more than just a piece of beautiful art – they become part of the gameplay puzzle.

So what other stages can gamers expect from Rogue Leader? Just about every single scene from the trilogy, it seems, and then some originals too. There is, of course, the Battle of Hoth, a level so big and overflowing with ultra-detailed AT-STs that it makes the N64 Shadows of the Empire look like a school project by comparison. Gamers who look closely will even see real-time shadows projected onto the ground from ships, machines and the hundreds of soldiers that wage war on the snowy lands.

Battle of Hoth

There is Razor Rendezvous, a space battle in which players must shoot down a massive Star Destroyer while fending off TIEs. There is the Battle Over Bespin, a beautiful, moody level amidst the famous Star Wars city. There is the Battle of Endor – a near replica of the same scene from the Trilogy complete with an intense battle. And yes – gamers will even find that if they are good enough, they will be able to unlock many other secrets and stages that are sure to surprise.

The Cloud Car

On top of everything else, there are also bonus missions. Remember when Luke manned the guns of the Millennium Falcon and blew TIE Fighters away? Gamers will be able to do the same thing in one of the extra stages present in Rogue Leader. And there are even more impressive secret stages that LucasArts and Factor 5 won't allow us to give away just yet.

⚜ The Technology

Rogue Leader is perhaps only matched in its variety by its beautiful graphics. Developer Factor 5 has worked overtime to realize just about every graphic effect in the book for its Star Wars action-shooter.

First, the title runs – for the most part, at 60 frames per second. There are two or three levels where the action drops to 30 frames, but it's forgivable as it's all so spectacularly detailed. The fluidity goes a long way too – imagine

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
ROGUE SQUADRON. II

soaring over the Death Star, shooting down dozens of TIEs and flying through fiery explosions with no hitch whatsoever in framerate. It's really quite amazing.

The developer has optimized its 3D engine so that the level draw distance is unequaled. Players will be able to see mountainous regions seemingly miles into the distance while flying over Kotais, and the level of detail is remarkable be it far or close away from a scene or object. Textures are high-resolution, and equally crisp and realistic. One look at an X-wing up close will send gamers into a drool frenzy.

Volumetric fog

On top of everything else, there are a number of special graphic effects too. Volumetric fogging is used in several stages to convey a misty, ambient environment. There is also dynamic smoke on crashed objects – players can actually fly through it and watch as the smoke dissipates. There is also real-time lighting so laser fire illuminates dark areas momentarily, and is used as a direct light source. Finally, there are real-time shadows, and self-shadowing objects, so most every vehicle casts a shadow. Clouds in the sky move and cast shadows onto the ground, and depending on the angle of the sun the light source changes too. It's all quite beautiful.

Everything Said and Done

Rogue Leader is videogame Star Wars as it has never been realized on a home console before. The game looks and feels like the trilogy movies it's based upon – it's just that good. Players everywhere still undecided about picking up a GameCube need look no further than this flagship effort. Our advice: hook it up to hefty stereo, play it in progressive scan mode and call some friends over. No sense in being blown away by yourself. Share the experience.

- Matt Casamassina

Time Makes a Difference

Two levels in Rogue Leader are changed depending on what time it is on the GameCube's internal clock. The Tatooine training mission features four different degrees of light, from early morning and afternoon to dusk and nightfall, and each one coincides with whatever time it reads on the GameCube. The Imperial Academy Heist, meanwhile, a later level in the game, is played totally differently depending on whether it's daylight or nightfall. We'll leave you to figure out how.

DAYTIME

EVENING

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
ROGUE SQUADRON. II

The ultimate joyride

Last But Not Least

Finally for your viewing pleasure we have three exclusive screenshots for you to drool over. If you think the Star Destroyer looks good in this tiny screenshot, wait until you see it in action!

The power generator

Dolby Pro Logic II

Thinking about buying a new stereo receiver? Check out some models capable of outputting in Dolby Pro Logic II. While GameCube doesn't feature a digital out, Dolby Pro Logic II simulates a 5.1 sound experience using analog inputs. Rogue Leader is the first game to use the format, and our "ears on" tests with the game can vouch for its claims. Have no doubts, if you own a DPLII receiver and play Rogue Leader, you will hear discrete separation in you rear surround sound speakers, and you can imagine how excellent that will be during those intense TIE battles.

Probe droids

The Progressive Experience

Gamers that own HDTVs will be happy to learn that Rogue Leader runs in progressive scan mode. Simply press the B button on the GameCube controller when booting the title scene and you will be asked if you'd like to run in progressive. Answer yes, and you're going to treated with a crisper, clearer picture void of all the black definition lines common of regular television sets.

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

RISING FEVER

THERE'S ENOUGH NEW STUFF IN NFL FEVER 2002 TO KEEP THE XBOX HOT AT LAUNCH

Even though the Sega Dreamcast has just about gone the way of the dodo bird, the impact of having a homegrown NFL title at system launch was certainly not lost on other players in the videogame industry. Nobody can deny the symbiotic relationship between the PlayStation 2 launch and EA Sports' Madden NFL 2001 and the success each brought to the other. Only Madonna and MTV have formed a stronger bond. It's no surprise then that Microsoft is polishing up its NFL Fever franchise and positioning it as the killer sports title at the launch of the Xbox.

All-American football may have replaced the fruity platformer and the epic adventure game to become the new weapon of mass appeal that launches a new videogame system, and that has only stoked the appetites and expectations of rabid pigskin fans. Yes we want our football on Xbox, but like the exciting St. Louis Rams we also want to see what new flavor NFL Fever 2002 is bringing to the game.

YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW AND PROVE

The Dynamic Player Performance system is one of the main selling points of Fever 2002, and it could be the feature that hardcore football fans end up appreciating the most when all is said and done. It's specifically designed for those of us who like to slog through a season or three in the Dynasty Mode with our favorite NFL squad in hopes that we can do a better job running the team than the real life General Managers and coaches. Except, rather than taking chances on real life players improving, you alone have the power to create excellence out of mediocrity.

In a nutshell, the DPP system keeps track of player performance and rewards or penalizes player ratings based on how well he does from week to week. You can take a marginal player like Oakland

RISING FEVER

Raiders #3 wideout Jerry Porter and blow up his ratings by catching touchdowns, gaining lots of yards and just generally whooping ass consistently. He'll actually get additional ratings points in the areas that matter most to a wide receiver, like speed, hands and agility. This, of course, will add to his overall rating, too.

This ratings increase doesn't happen instantly, however. After you play a game in your Dynasty, you simply go to "Coaching and Player Reports," then to "Roster and Player Reports," and then highlight the guy you want to look at. You'll instantly see if his ratings have increased, but you can then hit the white button for a comment from the all-powerful gods of football. They're the ones giving out these ratings, after all. At the end of a season you can also see how far a guy has developed over the course of the entire year.

When we talk about a ratings boost, we're only talking a couple of points here and there. If you blow up in two consecutive games with San Diego's Tim Dwight, he'll pick up maybe two or three points in his hands rating and maybe a point or two in speed. Maybe, just maybe, those ratings will be enough to boost his overall rating.

It is easier for some players to get a ratings boost than others. Wide receivers and defensive linemen, for example, seem to have a particularly tough time getting additional ratings points because in the NFL right now, those are two of the deepest and most competitive positions on a football team. On the other hand, there aren't many good safeties in the league right now because the most skilled guys often end up playing cornerback. So in NFL Fever, your safeties can quickly get better game-by-game if they rack up enough big tackles.

The DPP system also evaluates players in relation to all of the other players in the league, so not only is it extremely difficult to give a ratings boost to Marshall Faulk --because there are so many good running backs in the NFL nowadays-- but you'll hardly notice the difference if you do. The difference between 92 and 93 speed is negligible when you're using turbo all of the time anyway.

Your offensive linemen can suffer brutal ratings drops if your offense as a whole is just not getting it done. If you simply can't hit the hole with your RB or your QB is just generally ineffective, your offensive line will take a ratings hit before either of those skill positions will. If you take the Cincinnati Bengals as your Dynasty team and don't run the ball effectively with Corey Dillon, poor Willie Anderson and Richmond Webb will get worse in the ratings department before CD. Fumbles and interceptions are the way to send your QBs and RBs into the ratings basement, but if your offensive line deteriorates you'll have plenty of those anyway.

It is in this way that NFL Fever can accurately portray the team concept of pro football. Bad teams are generally bad all over with big holes on both sides of the ball. Think of it this way, Bills QB Rob Johnson is often criticized for holding on to the ball for far too long in the pocket. This results in far more sacks against him than if he were more of a scrambler or willing to throw the ball away when nobody is open. In NFL Fever 2002, a sack is a sack, and the CPU is going to blame the offensive line and penalize them if you're taking too many sacks. This is a videogame, and you're supposed to get rid of the ball, you know.

Don't forget, your computer opponents play under the same rules, so their guys get better and worse too. Curtis Martin of the New York Jets is certainly one of the best RBs in the league, but you don't want to be

RISING FEVER

the team that has to stop him when he's on a roll. If Martin is coming off a 220 yard rushing day with 4 TDs, you can be sure his ratings are going to increase, and he'll be even more dangerous when you play him the following week. It's possible for players to get on rolls like this and just keep going all the way through the season. We saw Miami's Lamar Smith have a breakout game in Week 3 once, and by the time the season ended he was league MVP with 2000 rushing yards and 19 TDs.

In the end, the Dynamic Player Performance is a way for the good players to get better and the crappy ones to get crappier, but only if the player in control (that would be you) allows this to happen. It's comforting to know that if you so decide, you can take some fifth round schlepper and turn him into a Pro Bowl, nacho-chip-commercial-starring football icon if you consistently, game in and game out, year after year, make him produce. If only the Cowboys and Patriots had that luxury.

THE BLING

NFL Fever 2002's Trophy Case is the one stop menu where you can see all of the awards, records and career honors a football player can earn in the game. This is the place where, after you've put in 25 years of outstanding work as a Dynasty Mode stud, you should see all of your players and teams being recognized. You can check out everything from the Hall of Fame to the reigning Super Bowl MVP. For the Stat Heads, the NFL Records section holds virtually every worthwhile individual game, season and career record. You'll be pleased to know that all of the records are accurate and so are the names of the record holders. Walter Payton is indeed the NFL's all-time leading rusher with 16,726 yards with Emmit Smith creeping right up on him as you read this.

Even if your franchise of choice didn't have a first round pick like the Cowboys, you can still make players like Quincy Carter Rookie of the Year fairly easily because he's only being compared to other offensive rookies. This makes ROY one of the easiest accomplishments in the game and a nice quick way to make your mark on Fever's Trophy Case. Most offensive rookies see very little playing time, and unless they're Kevin Barlow or LaDainian Tomlinson, you should be able to beat them out any kind of decent rookie season. You'll get a special sense of accomplishment when you are the proud owner of a Rookie of the Year.

Winning the league MVP and Super Bowl MVP awards is at least 16 times more difficult than winning the ROY award. Why? Because the players in Fever 2002 are damn good. You'll have to put it in the end zone week in and week out over a sixteen game season to contend for the MVP and then cross your fingers. Think of it this way, as good as Faulk was last year, he was still head and shoulders over the group of other guys who were considered for the award in 2000, and Donovan McNabb, Rich Gannon and Daunte Culpepper weren't exactly chopped liver. Big numbers, consistency, and health are all any NFL player ever asks for, and you'll definitely need all of that to
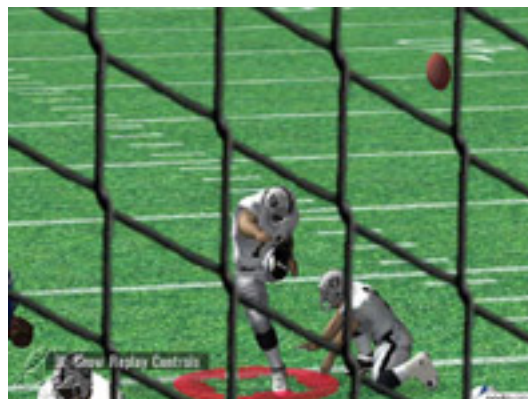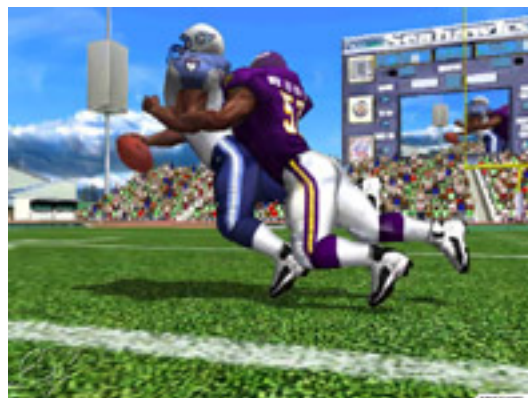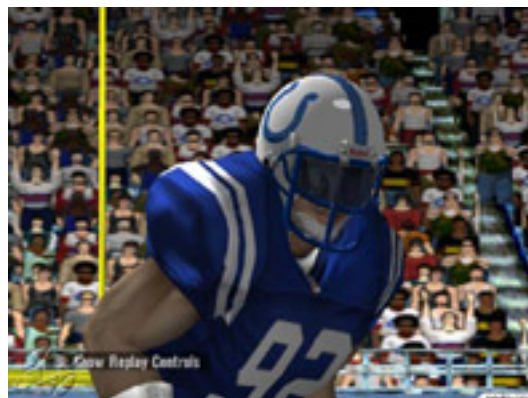
take MVP. To win the Super Bowl MVP all you need is a big day on Super Sunday, and if a one game wonder like Larry Brown can do it, certainly anybody can. The challenge with the Super Bowl MVP is simply getting to the big game. A nice trick here might be letting your star running back carry you through the season, but let some other player, even a special teams wizard, dominate on Super Bowl Sunday. There's no telling what guy might end up holding the MVP trophy. I, for one, would like to see a kicker take home that prize one year, just to shake the established routine.

Having your jersey retired and making it to the Hall of Fame are the challenges that will prove to be most elusive for even the most dedicated Dynasty Mode players. Consistency over a season is one thing, but to constantly perform year after year is something only the most dedicated athletes, and of course NFL Fever GMs, can hope to accomplish. Your team is going to have turnover, whether you're a wheel 'em and deal 'em kind of GM like Seattle's Mike Holmgren, or a character driven franchise owner like Al Davis. To get one of your guys into the Hall of Fame or to have his jersey retired is going to be an accomplishment to be proud of. If you want to wimp out, go the easy route and take all of the credit when Jerry Rice, Bruce Smith, and Cris Carter go to the Hall of Fame, but when you do, in the back of your mind, you'll know those cats didn't need your help when you took control of the Raiders, 'Skins or Vikings. A good 10+ years of outstanding production is what separates the HOFers from the pack, and unlike Lynn Swann and so many other great players, your guys will go to the Hall as soon as they retire, not 12 or 15 years after they're first eligible.

Getting a player's jersey retired is supposed to be easier than getting him to the Hall of Fame, but with the exception of the Seattle Seahawks #12 --which was dedicated to the fans-- retiring a number is still going to take a lot of damn good football. So there won't be any retired jerseys because your team needs some good PR or to generate community excitement. Just like you'd expect, new players that come to your team won't have the option of wearing numbers that have been retired. Why else do you think Trent Dilfer is wearing #4 this year for the 'Hawks? So he can be more like Brett Favre?

The Trophy Case, as we said, is the one place you can go to check out all of the NFL accolades you can earn in Fever, but you can also check the individual bios on a player and you'll see his career accomplishments. Right off the bat you'll be able to see how many Pro Bowl designations and MVP Awards Favre has won when you check out his stats and ratings.

Your mission is to take mediocre journeymen and turn them into league icons, thanks to the Dynamic Player Performance System, so they can then be enshrined in NFL Fever's Trophy Case for having made the transformation. Yes football games have become the way to launch a system, but with engrossing, all encompassing experiences like Fever's Trophy Case and Dynamic Player Performance, NFL Fever 2002 can bring football to life any day of the week and any time of year. **– Aaron Boulding ∎**

Fran Mirabella III

This Month in GameCube ::

It's finally here. After all the waiting and all the hoping, the fantasy has become a reality. I don't even have to tell you what it is. You already know. You can go into stores on Nov. 18 and pick it up off of the shelf. It's yours. It's GameCube.

You'll probably drool over the hardware design for a while, staring at it and touching it for uncomfortably long periods of time. Don't worry, this is normal. Inevitably you'll put in your game of choice. But wait, are you sure you know what game that is? Is Luigi's Mansion really worth your money? Is Wave Race: Blue Storm as good as you've heard? What about those wild chimps in Super Monkey Ball, can they be trusted? It just so happens that we have answers for you. This month's edition of Unplugged has reviews for these three GameCube titles. However, if reviews scores aren't enough we have a full-fledged feature on Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader as well.

Enjoy Unplugged. Enjoy GameCube.

For more Cube news, reviews, previews, and more, visit **http://cube.ign.com.**

Featured Review ::
036 :: Wave Race: Blue Storm

Also In This Issue ::
037 :: Review: Super Monkey Ball
038 :: Review: Luigi's Mansion

Review :: Super Monkey Ball
Sega's addictive old-school action-puzzler will have you seeing monkeys in your sleep.

Review :: Luigi's Mansion
Is it Mario 64 for GameCube? No. Is it still a fun little adventure? You bet.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
2 :: Super Smash Bros. Melee
3 :: Rogue Squadron II
4 :: Pikmin
5 :: Wave Race: Blue Storm

Office Abuse ::
Thanks to IGN interns Hilary and Niki, Fran is no longer the girliest editor in the office.

GameCube :: Review

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM

Nintendo has recreated its brilliant water-top racer in stunning next-generation form.

If you're a Nintendo 64 fanatic, you have most likely heard of Wave Race 64. It is perhaps the N64's most amazing racer. Knowing that millions of fans have been waiting for a sequel Nintendo has given them the ultimate reason to buy a GameCube.

Blue Storm returns with many of the same modes that were in the N64 version including Championship, Time Trial, Stunt, Multiplayer, and Free Run. There's even a deep tutorial mode if you want to learn basic controls and stunts. The normal, hard, and expert Championship circuits are the biggest appeal. The difficulty ramps up quickly and is particularly demanding in the last races of expert mode. If you want to carelessly flail your arms and run your watercraft into walls, you better stick to Free Run.

However, this is what Wave Race is all about -- control. At first touch you can't help but feel intimidated. Some might be quick to say, "You can't control your craft." In fact though, the control is brilliant. It is just very demanding as many car-based racing sims are. You actually have to learn the subtleties of control, which require you to pull back on the analog stick on sharp corners and use the R and L triggers to lean into turns.

Once you get past the control scheme you'll be rewarded with an extremely deep gameplay experience. A few of Blue Storm's biggest achievements are the randomized weather conditions and wave dynamics. Weather can vary from clear to foggy to severe storm conditions and there is little way to prepare for it. When a severe storm hits a course the waves will often change from three feet to 10 feet, which mercilessly tosses your watercraft about. The effects are without a doubt some of the best we've witnessed.

More importantly, no matter what the condition, everything runs at a silky smooth 30 frames per second. That includes the impressive four-player mode, which allows you to play all tracks and weather conditions as well as Stunt mode. It all runs without a hitch.

Having played Blue Storm extensively we can tell you that it is going to be unsurpassed by the competition for years to come. Its airtight control, breathtaking weather effects, and stunning wave complexity combine for an irresistible racing experience. Any self-respecting fan of the original must own it, and any GameCube owner looking for a racer should not pass it by. Plain and simple, Blue Storm is the definitive "wave racer." *-- Fran Mirabella III* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Nintendo
Developer ::	NST
Genre ::	Racing
# of Players ::	4
Release Date ::	November 18, 2001

Ratings ::

Presentation ::	9.0	
Graphics ::	8.0	**Overall Score**
Sound ::	7.0	**9.2**
Gameplay ::	9.0	
Lasting Appeal ::	8.0	

gamecube :: review

GameCube :: Review

SUPER MONKEY BALL

Sega's addictive old-school action-puzzler will have you seeing monkeys in your sleep.

Sometimes a videogame comes out that makes gamers question what drugs the designers were on when they first thought of the idea. Sega's Super Monkey Ball is such a title. The offering can loosely be called an action-puzzler, but that hardly describes what it's about. Like the classic Marble Madness, it challenges players to roll balls through maze-like levels without falling off. Except players control the tilt of the 3D boards and levels, not the balls.

There is actually much more to Super Monkey Ball than initially meets the eye. Players can choose from four different monkey -- uh, balls, and then it's off to the action. There are three different levels of board difficulty and a total of some 90 different stages between them, each harder to complete than the next. Beyond these, great players can unlock additional extra levels that will certainly knock their socks off.

The first nine or so areas are easy enough. They are flat-like and pretty straightforward, but one can begin to see the level of progression at stage 10, which winds a bit and is much more difficult to successfully navigate the monkey through. And it just gets harder. Some might think it too hard, in fact. Later stages twist, wind, drop off, twirl, and feature seemingly physics-defying routes that gamers must figure out a way through. The game is all about trial and error, and at times it can spark hair-pulling frustration. But there is always the draw to the next level and that's a testament to the game's overall appeal.

But there is so much more. There are party games that include everything from multiplayer Monkey Billiards (complete with real pool physics) to Monkey Golf. There are mini-games including Monkey Fight, a scenario in which multiple monkeys fight it out with big gloves on top of a floating arena; the idea being to knock each other off. And there are four-player modes up at every turn, which makes this the ultimate GameCube party game.

The technology powering Super Monkey Ball is basic. The game runs at a constant 60 frames per second even in four-player mode, which is certainly commendable. But in the end, the beauty of this game is wholly secondary to its play.

Super Monkey Ball is a drug. It's addictive. It's fun in an old-school way that most modern software has somehow forgotten. And it's a multiplayer gift from the heavens. But be warned -- it's also sometimes incredibly difficult as some of the later levels are nearly impossible to complete, and that is bound to aggravate determined players. Those looking for a good, old-fashioned challenge who don't mind simplified graphics will not do better. *-- Matt Casamassina* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Sega
Developer ::	Amusement Vision
Genre ::	Puzzle
# of Players ::	4
Release Date ::	November 18, 2001

Ratings ::

Presentation ::	8.0	
Graphics ::	7.0	**Overall Score**
Sound ::	5.0	**8.3**
Gameplay ::	8.0	
Lasting Appeal ::	10.0	

GameCube :: Review

LUIGI'S MANSION

Is it Mario 64 for GameCube? No. Is is still a fun little adventure? You bet.

The EAD-developed Luigi's Mansion – Nintendo's Mario stand-in -- features a plot and premise ripped right out of the movie Ghostbusters. With a flashlight and ghost-sucking vacuum Luigi must save his superstar brother Mario from peril. In the hybrid adventure-puzzle game, Luigi explores the many rooms of a haunted mansion and captures ghosts. Players control the character with camera stick and aim his flashlight with the analog one.

This scheme is tricky at first, but one gets used to it quickly enough. The idea is to first stun an appearing ghost with Luigi's flashlight and then lock onto and suck them in with the vacuum cleaner. But there's a little more to it for many of the ghosts cannot be captured until mini-puzzles have first been solved. For example, in one area a girly ghost sits at her makeup mirror and refuses to turn around, but if Luigi sucks back the drapes of a nearby window a draft will enter the room, she will get cold and get up, and then she can be captured. The puzzles are never particularly difficult to figure out, it must be said, which is disappointing.

Luigi's Mansion is a half-successful technology demo. It features probably the best real-time lighting and shadowing effects ever to grace a videogame. Luigi's flashlight casts shadows onto objects, across walls, illuminates dark hallways and even highlights dust particles close by. It all looks gorgeous. Also, EAD has developed a brilliant set of cloth physics so that drapes, bedspreads, and other fabrics animate realistically and react to the suction of the vacuum cleaner flawlessly. Luigi's polygon model detailed and joyfully animated to react accordingly to environments -- indeed, the amount of character in the game is unrivaled. But the textures in the game are of almost N64 quality, sometimes blurry and up close downright ugly.

To be sure, the game is a fun enough romp while it lasts. There are different rooms to explore with slightly changed puzzles and later in the game Luigi acquires new abilities that enable him to shoot flames and ice from his vacuum cleaner. But the adventure is by no means a great one. The insides of the mansion and the sucking of ghosts become decidedly repetitive after a bit and then, before one knows it, the game is over.

Many were hoping that Luigi's Mansion would be Game-Cube's Mario 64. It isn't. It's fun for awhile, it's certainly beautiful, but it lacks the depth and variety of Miyamoto's N64 classic. Recommended as a rental to most as it can be bested so quickly. Nintendo fanatics, however, may want to consider the purchase for the sheer amount of character that the title delivers. *– Matt Casamassina* ∎

Details ::

Publisher :: Nintendo

Developer :: Nintendo

Genre :: Adventure

# of Players :: 1

Release Date :: November 18, 2001

Ratings ::

Presentation :: 7.0

Graphics :: 9.0

Sound :: 7.0

Gameplay :: 7.0

Lasting Appeal :: 2.0

Overall Score

7.0

xbox :: *index*

Vincent Lopez

This Month in Xbox ::

Are you excited yet? I tell you what: my loins are as warm as a piece of toast in the Mojave Desert with the upcoming launch of the Xbox. Sure I've already had a chance to play the first party stuff, and you've read about most of the titles – but none of that matters until you, the people, get your own opinions about the games. Once you've got your own big green brutes to muscle around, and once you've felt what it's like to do Capture the Flag with Scorpion tanks in Halo, that's when the fun begins.

Unfortunately, fun in the world of the press means validation, so after all this hard work we're hoping that you think the same things we do about the system: it's the best new thing for this fall, and the journey's only just begun. What, did you forget that there's a Japanese, European, and online launch coming before summer of next year? The Xbox has just left the start line...there's still a long race to come.

For more Xbox news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
http://xbox.ign.com.

Featured Review ::
040 :: Halo

Also In This Issue ::
041 :: Review: Dead or Alive 3
042 :: Review: Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee

Review :: Dead or Alive 3
Best fighting game ever? Maybe. A reason to buy the Xbox? Definitely.

Review :: Munch's Oddysee
Munch just can't match Abe's heroism.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

5 :: GUNVALKYRIE

4 :: Jet Set Radio Future

3 :: Project Ego (In 2005, when it's released)

2 :: Unreal Championship

1 :: Wreckless

Office Abuse ::
Vincent can do all of Michael Jackson's Motown Anniversary performance... but it'll cost ya'.

xbox :: review

Xbox :: Review
HALO
Slaughtering aliens on a console has never been this fun, this beautiful, or this innovative.

You're not really getting the full experience of the Xbox unless you've played Halo. In so many ways, this is the videogame you've always wanted to play that nobody would ever make because it was too difficult to pull off. The team at Bungie somehow created an epic first person shooter without hiding, sacrificing, or glossing over any rough spots --because there simply are none. Halo is remarkable in that it combines the very best science fiction, action, tactical, and vehicle combat elements into one seamless videogame.

Halo serves notice that the standards for both videogame companies and game players have been raised. From the variety of weapons that your Mark V cyborg Master Chief fires to the alien dialect spoken by the evil Covenant, the audio is excellent in every way. And the truth is they have to be, because sometimes the only way you'll know what's going on or what to do is by a character's voice instructions or the sound of a distant enemy coming to smash you.

This is why gamers will have to change their expectations in Halo. When you hit the pause button looking for a menu or map to help you through a level, you get nothing. Everything you need is in the game, in real time, right where you need it. So you'll have to rely on your own skill to maneuver the Warthog assault jeep (an outstanding innovation in and of itself) or pilot an alien Ghost or Banshee vehicle, because Halo demands it and you'll be happy to oblige. If you're lost in a level with nobody attacking you, that only means you haven't proceeded in the right direction and tripped the trigger for the next event. Sometimes it's a dropship unloading a bunch of marines to help you out, sometimes it's a new wave of even nastier bad guys. Whatever the case, it really is your fault if you're not fully engaged in Halo's awesomeness.

Excellent storytelling in a videogame with this much action is almost unheard of, but you will get caught up in the drama of Halo. This is partly because of the amazing voice acting and some talented writers, but really it's the excellent sense of pace that Halo establishes with the gamer that keeps things moving. After slamming through hordes of bad guys with hundreds of thousands of bullets in some sections of the game, you will be rewarded with a timely cut scene that

explains the need for all of your ass kicking and you will even be motivated to continue your Sigourney Weaver-like ways. There hasn't been this kind of integration between storyline and action since a little PC shooter called Half-Life entered our lexicon.

Although no review will be comprehensive enough to explain all of its merits, you'll have to trust us that top to bottom, Halo marks a turning point in videogames as a whole and is plenty strong enough to carry the Xbox through its launch.
– Aaron Boulding ∎
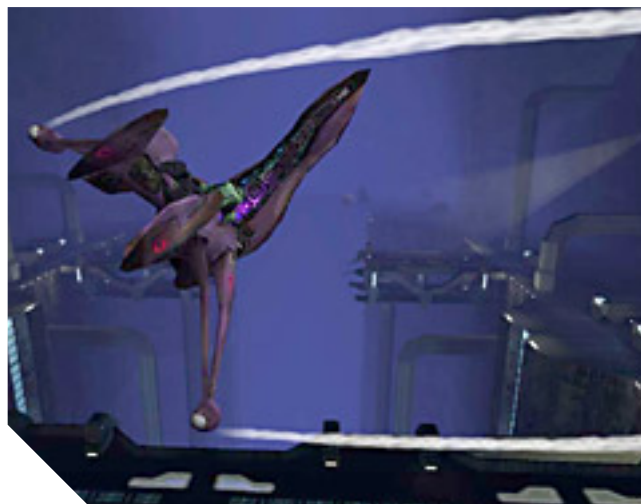
Details ::

Publisher ::	Microsoft
Developer ::	Bungie
Genre ::	Action
# of Players ::	16
Release Date ::	November 15, 2001

Ratings ::

Presentation ::	10.0
Graphics ::	10.0
Sound ::	10.0
Playability ::	10.0
Lasting Appeal ::	9.0

Overall Score
9.7

Xbox :: Review
DEAD OR ALIVE 3
Best fighting game ever? Maybe. A reason to buy the Xbox? Definitely.

There's a reason why we've been blowing up coverage on Dead or Alive 3. There's definitely a reason why no matter how awfully busy all of the staff here at IGN can be, we always have time to sneak into our demo room to play "one more game" of Dead or Alive 3. Excellent controls, addicting gameplay, and the most impressive visuals in a fighting game so far are what make Dead or Alive 3 not just a great 3D fighting game, but a title that could easily sell the Xbox on its own.

You might be asking yourself, "Isn't this game just a high-resolution version of Dead or Alive 2?" To those who look at Dead or Alive 3 and call it a slightly better looking Dead or Alive 2, you're extremely wrong -- and perhaps not even human. Once you see the game in motion and engross yourself in the fast-paced nature of this well-balanced game, you will see the light that is Dead or Alive 3 – and such a wondrous light it is.

The visual jump from DOA2 to DOA3 is quite big; there's definitely a difference in the visual splendor this game overflows with. The backgrounds in the game are simply magnificent, including the impressive Hong Kong level where you can send an opponent flying off a building, into a neon sign, and land in the streets with hundreds of neon signs in the backgrounds. The detail to the characters is incredible as well, and you can tell the type of fabric of a character's costumes because you see it! Animations are extremely well done and very exciting to watch, especially the explosive tag team throws.

As much as we can get pleasurably lost in the visuals, it's all about gameplay baby, and Dead or Alive 3 certainly fills the void left by so many other fighting games. 3D movement has been simplified so you don't need to press the Free button to sidestep, a relief to several fans of the series. Counters must be done with greater precision and aren't as powerful as they used to be -- definitely welcome change.

Although we can gripe about the ending movies, the few collision problems, and other minor problems in the game, they won't effect the great entertainment and quality of time you'll be spending when you buy that Xbox for Dead or Alive 3.
– Anthony Chau ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Tecmo
Developer ::	Tecmo
Genre ::	Fighting
# of Players ::	4
Release Date ::	November 15, 2001

Ratings ::

Presentation ::	9.3	
Graphics ::	9.9	**Overall Score**
Sound ::	9.0	**9.4**
Playability ::	9.5	
Lasting Appeal ::	8.9	

Xbox :: Review

ODDWORLD: MUNCH'S ODDYSEE

Munch just can't match Abe's heroism.

The Oddworld series began on the PlayStation, but has since moved into Microsoft's pocket, and is now ready as one of the pillars of the Xbox launch. But how does it stand against stellar titles like Halo and Dead or Alive 3?

Not well. DoA3 and Halo aren't just pretty, they're smoothed to perfection -- the chrome of videogame experiences. Munch, on the other hand, comes off as clumsy and awkward as its one-legged star, thanks to some odd control issues, and slow pacing.

Never has an attempt to create controller simplicity ended in such convolution. Odd commands are doubled onto one button, and other commands like Gamespeak are made more complex than they should be. Simple acts like jumping are made more difficult by weird trajectories, and even trying to get Abe over a slim walkway will have you sweating with concentration. In short, the control just doesn't work.

As for gameplay, it's like taking Oddworld and shifting it directly to 3D, which sounds better than it really is. Levels are small, and usually focused on avoiding instant death. In a fully 3D environment however, the gameplay is slowed down because of the larger space, and made more repetitious because of it. Adding strategy elements to the series definitely makes for more interesting gameplay however, and it's fun as hell to send in your Mudokon troops after enemies.

On a good note, the story's still there, and it's some of the best humor the Oddworld team has dug up yet. Twisted, black, hilarious stuff that adds another layer to the oddities of Oddworld. Unfortunately, there's no longer the seamless transitions between cutscenes and gameplay that were the Oddworld trademark. In fact, because you teleport into and out of levels, there's absolutely no coherent connection between environments anymore. After a few hours of play, it becomes obvious that what you are now playing is a puzzle game with some pretty pictures in between. That was Abe's

Oddysee as well...but because of production values it was much less obvious.

Munch is a mixed bag -- alternately smaller and larger in scope, sometimes frustrating, at times funny and a blast to play. The step to next-generation has been much rougher on the Oddworld team than most, and in the end Munch feels like a lot of great ideas matched with some school of hard knocks game design. I can't wait for the next game in the series, when these bruises have healed and they've learned their lessons. *-- Vincent Lopez* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Microsoft
Developer ::	Oddworld Inhabitants
Genre ::	Action/Puzzle
# of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	November 15, 2001

Ratings ::

|		
Presentation ::	9.5	
Graphics ::	8.0	**Overall Score**
Sound ::	9.0	**7.4**
Playability ::	5.0	
Lasting Appeal ::	7.0	

playstation 2 :: *index*

Douglass C. Perry

This Month in PlayStation 2 ::

For anybody even remotely close to the growing sphere of videogames, this November will certainly deliver a powerful impact. Some of the best games ever created are arriving on PlayStation 2, and the Microsoft Xbox and the Nintendo GameCube will arrive in retail stores as well. The new age of consoles is here, and we're on the giddy, massive, unsure brink of it all.

Beyond the most basic important questions, "Which games should I buy?" or "Which console is better?" is the un-foretold future. Will Microsoft make it in the long run? Will Nintendo ever try to woo mature gamers? Will programmers ever learn to like coding for PS2? And, most importantly, what is the definition of a videogame?

Games have always been fun in the lightest sense of the word, but now more than ever their roles are expanding. Games are massive experiences, epic stories, and community-building experiences. They have met and raised our expectations. So we have, realistically or unrealistically, grown to expect more from each. It might be worth asking yourself, what do you expect?

For PS2 news, reviews, previews and more visit **http://ps2.ign.com.**

T A C T I C A L E S P I O N A G E A C T I O N
METAL GEAR SOLID 2
SONS OF LIBERTY

Featured Review ::

Also In This Issue ::
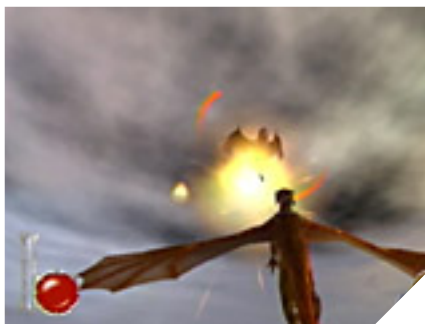
Drakan: The Ancients' Gates
SCEA takes a different route with Drakan, a dual flying-fighting epic rooted deep in the world of role-playing fantasy.

Jeremy McGrath's Supercross World
Acclaim brings motocross to PlayStation 2 – will this break the streak, or stretch it another generation?

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Grand Theft Auto III

2 :: Metal Gear Solid 2

3 :: Jak and Daxter

4 :: Devil May Cry

5 :: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

Office Abuse ::
I am abused. I am tortured. The reviews will not stop. Sleep is not an option. Food? Bah. Just give me time for one more mission in Grand Theft Auto...

PlayStation 2 :: Review
METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY
Perfection? What is that, anyway? Metal Gear Solid 2 is as good a game as you'll play in any year.

Perhaps three-quarters of Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty comprise the finest videogame made to date. The other bits, unfortunately, are a bit of a problem. This is, by all means, the game you should get for your PS2 this Christmas, because the parts that are cool are so unbelievably cool, but there are still some significant disappointments to be found, perhaps made all the more disappointing by the glory they sit alongside.

I'm only going to say one thing about the game's story in the factual sense, and that is this: everything you know is wrong. Beyond that, you should experience it all for yourself, which means that you should NOT read the game manual. Amazing, that Konami could keep a granite poker face for 18 months and then give everything away in the manual. Bureaucracy is a silly thing.

So put that booklet aside, and play the game. You know what you're doing, after all, and the superior MGS controls have been further expanded and refined. The new moves aren't just icing on the cake, they're genuine and significant additions to gameplay. Jumpout shot, diving roll, and the all-important first-person shooting mode give new life to the sneaking experience, which is even more important this time around. In the original MGS, you could survive an alert, and perhaps even a firefight. In MGS2, once that klaxon goes off, your life ticks away with every second. The guards are tougher, smarter, and more numerous, meaning your choices are few: run, hide, or die.

Generally, you want to run and hide, since survival means experiencing moments of unrivalled cinematic excitement. Hideo Kojima is a brilliant natural director,

backed by some of the best technical talent in the industry, and the result is more jaw-drops than you'll be able to count. It would be criminal to give away any hint of the surprises to be found beyond the early movements of the game, but far more than the price of admission is paid for. The graphics engine renders huge, realistic worlds, meticulously crafted and shaded in with brilliant effects -- just wait. The excellent score is intense or calm as the situation demands, and the action rivals anything Hollywood's imagination could produce.

Since there are so many scenes and so many moments that are so drop-dead cool, though...perhaps that's why it hurts so badly when the game drops the ball. Yes, it certainly does, with some unfortunate failings in character development and plot construction. The satisfaction of many moments is overshadowed by others that simply should not be.

Again, it's hard to discuss this without spoilers, but it's possible to describe some issues in general terms. For one, the game trusts too many moments of great ▶

Details ::

Publisher ::	Konami
Developer ::	Konami JPN West
Genre ::	Adventure
# of Players ::	1

PlayStation 2 :: Review
METAL GEAR SOLID 2

Perfection? What is that, anyway? Metal Gear Solid 2 is as good a game as you'll play in any year.

emotional significance to the talking-heads setting of the Codec screen. MGS2 sits atop the gaming mountain as far as the quality of its writing and acting, but there are still several sequences that should be shown, not told. Minutes of conversation could be replaced by a thirty-second cutscene that would drive the point home with far, far more power.

In other situations, neither showing nor telling is appropriate. Some scenes simply needed to be removed, passages which develop characters in entirely inappropriate directions -- you cringe or laugh when neither is anywhere near the creator's intention. It's particularly sad to see space used like that when there are other characters who desperately need more development. In the original MGS, every enemy got some time to flesh out their personality and motivation. Here, some get short shrift when we're begging to learn more about them. It's also worth noting that the tally of boss battles is a tad smaller than the original, and while they're still quite inventive, there's nothing that can quite hang with the Vulcan Raven battle, the brilliant Psycho Mantis duel, or the impact of fighting Metal Gear REX for the first time.

The plot has problems towards the end, although some descend from the need to set up a sequel -- yes, MGS2 will definitely be followed up in the future. Unfortunately, that means there are still a few threads left hanging in the current game. The confused tangle of allegiances and motivations that crisscross the cast and story is further complicated by the fact that the genuine villains won't be dealt with until the next adventure.

If Metal Gear Solid 2 fails occasionally as a dramatic creation, though, when you have your hands on the controls, it's a grand slam. Playing through multiple times is mandatory, even after the 12-15 hours of your first go. In no way could you find all the wonderful secrets, details, and in-jokes that are buried in every corner of the game by just playing once. The commando simulation itself is a brilliant toy to play with. Fiddling with the environment, tormenting the guards, experimenting with gadgets, exploring the nooks and crannies, there's entertainment here to fill hours and hours.

In the end, that's what matters. This is a synthesis of movie and game, but game should always take the forefront, and Metal Gear Solid 2 most certainly succeeds as a game, long periods of controller inaction notwithstanding. What's more, during some of those cutscenes, picking up the Dual Shock is the last thing on your mind. This isn't perfection, but it's certainly brilliance, and it's satisfying to know that there's more of it coming soon. -- *David Smith* ∎
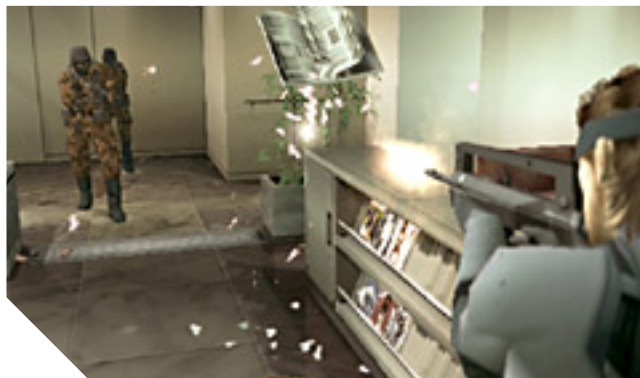
Ratings ::

Presentation ::	9.0
Graphics ::	9.8
Sound ::	9.8
Gameplay ::	9.8
Lasting Appeal ::	9.8

Overall Score
9.7

PlayStation 2 :: Preview

DRAKAN: THE ANCIENTS' GATES

SCEA takes a different route with Drakan, a dual flying-fighting epic rooted deep in the world of role-playing fantasy.

Originally made for the PC almost two years ago, Surreal's Drakan: Order of the Flame sought to lure gamers into the romantic, fantastic setting in which humans and dragons intermingled as comrades and friends, fought together, and laid down a civilization of harmony and peace with one another. The game proved to be so popular and inviting that Sony Computer Entertainment America and Surreal decided to partner to create Drakan: The Ancient's Gates exclusively for PlayStation 2.

The premise of Drakan: The Ancient's Gates is similar to the PC version, and the gameplay also strikes a familiar tone, but the game offers what only one other game (3DO's Dragon Rage) on PlayStation 2 does right now – it enables gamers the chance to play, fight, fly and interact as a dragon. That's just half the story, really; Surreal's 40-plus hour, action-adventure is a two-part epic, giving gamers the chance to play as Arokh the dragon, and as Rynn, a tough female, spell-casting warrioress.

Due January 2002, this dual-character epic is a different kind of game for SCEA. Starting the skimpily clad female warrior Rynn, who just happens to have a slight English accent, and can perform a bevy of athletic moves, the similarities to Eidos' lead lady hasn't gone unnoticed. But it's the fantasy realm that's kind of new for SCEA, more than anything.

Starting sometime after the PC's Order of the Flame, Drakan: The Ancient's Gates sets up Rynn and Arokh in her village, which has just been burned to the ground. With little left to recover from the area accept to bury and to pay last respects to the dead, Arokh flies to a secret compound hidden away, while Rynn meets him soon thereafter. Together they must seek to awaken the great dragons of the past from their slumber to extinguish the rising dark forces bent on ruling the world by fear and intimidation.

Drakan is interesting in that it plays much like an action-RPG. Gamers solve puzzles and follow the story-driven plot, but very much in the RPG vein, they also buy and sell equipment, power-up their skills as either an archer, warrior, or mage (or a combination of all three), and they follow a linear path that offers lots of branching sub-quests. The action part is naturally the combat (against as many as 30 creatures total), which occurs while Rynn straddles Arokh and they two fight in mid-air. Arokh casts fireballs and is unusually nimble, and players can use a functioning targeting system to aim at whichever target they choose.

Drakan: The Ancient's Gates should be a deep, involving game that gives gamers a little something different in their post-holiday hunger for new games. *– Douglass C. Perry* ■

Details ::

Publisher ::	SCEA
Developer ::	Surreal
Genre ::	Action-Adventure
Number of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	January 2002

PlayStation 2 :: Preview
JEREMY MCGRATH'S SUPERCROSS WORLD
Acclaim brings motocross to PlayStation 2 – will this break the streak, or stretch it another generation?

The Jeremy McGrath motocross series has historically received a pretty rough reception from critics, all the way from its early beginnings to the recent McGrath Vs. Pastrana, but it's never failed to be a hit at the box office, with one of the biggest names in the sport raking in fan interest and fan cash through several installments on PlayStation, Nintendo 64, and Dreamcast. Now, Jeremy McGrath's Supercross World debuts the series on PlayStation 2, with plenty of new features and buzzwords to once again try and win over the crowded motocross market. Two games already have a stake planted in the territory (THQ's Ricky Carmichael and Infogrames' MX Rider), but Acclaim has always had considerable success even in the face of heavy competition.

As always, McGrath leads the ranks of licensed pros, although 125cc champion Travis Pastrana is shortly behind.   Competition in free-ride, freestyle, and championship modes takes you to 25 different tracks, split up in several different categories. Along with the National and Supercross tracks, eight of each, there are four stunt courses and five Baja free-ride sections, where you can race through the sand without track borders or boundaries (a first for the series). All the different courses figure into the championship mode, where the Career Rewards system gradually unlocks new levels, bikes, and riders in return for your success.

The freestyle mode, of course, remains a fixture, despite questionable execution in the past (which goes for the genre as a whole, truth be known). The new Flexible Stunt System is intended to create a more fluid trick

experience, though, with more control over the duration and performance of stunts to string together a wider variety of combos. In total, there are more than 24 different tricks to perform, and each rider has a particular package of stunts to mimic their real-life repertoire. Like it or not, you'll have to work a little freestyle into your racing acumen, because the Stunt Advantage system provides better racing performance to match your ability to pull off tricks.

The biggest of questions remains, though – can it break the painful streak of Jeremy McGraths past? A new system, new graphics engine, and new gameplay look like they'll at least give the series a fighting chance on PlayStation 2. In any event, we don't have very long to wait, considering that the game's November release (along the rest of the terrible fall PlayStation 2 flood) is coming up in just a few weeks. If your motocross money isn't spent yet, wait a little while until all the cards are on the table, and see how this three-way race shakes out. *– David Smith* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Acclaim
Developer ::	Acclaim Studios SLC
Genre ::	Sports
Number of Players ::	2
Release Date ::	November 2001

Craig Harris

This Month in Handhelds ::

Okay folks, I've had it. One too many Game Boy Advance games has pushed me over the edge. It's driving me nuts, and I can't take it any more.

Game developers and publishers: for pete's sake, give us the opportunity to just jump right into a game when we turn on the system. For whatever reason, most of your games force us to wade through page after page of copyright, publisher, and developer information. Hey, I'm all for giving credit where credit is due, but geez...do we need to read all that every time we boot up your game?

Here's a novel idea: when the user hits start, have the game jump right to the main menu! Or hey, why not use the battery save in the cartridge to actually remember when a gamer's actually sat through the stack of legal copy? These screens are a neat trick to cover load times in console games because of the CD format, but we're on a cartridge medium.

Yeah, I'm bitching. But you try and play dozens of GBA games before Christmas without letting that get on your nerves.

Oh, and Happy Thanksgiving!

For more handhelds news, reviews, previews, and more, visit http://pocket.ign.com.

Featured Preview ::
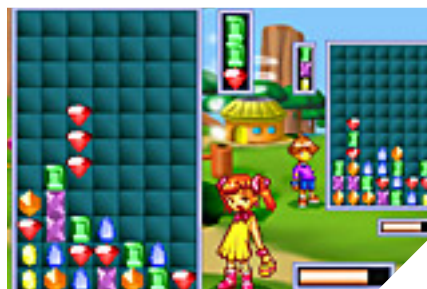**049** :: Tekken Advance

Also In This Issue ::
050 :: Preview: Sheep
050 :: Preview: Columns Crown

Preview :: Sheep
The games just keep getting more strange...but hey, folks need the wool.

Preview :: Columns Crown
A classic handheld game returns to try to become...a classic handheld game.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Sonic the Hedgehog Advance

2 :: Tekken Advance

3 :: Mortal Kombat Advance

4 :: Super Mario Advance 2

5 :: Advance Advance (you know someone's going to do this)

Office Abuse ::
Craig Harris once ate an entire jar of Vlassic pickles in one sitting. Later he learned they weren't free.

Game Boy Advance :: Preview
TEKKEN ADVANCE

Tape up those fists, boys and girls – the Namco favorite is coming to the portable.

One of the staples in the PlayStation library has always been Namco's 3D fighting game, Tekken. It's already established itself as one of the best 3D fighters on the market, and Namco's going to prove that it's not the system's power that makes the game awesome. The company has been working hard on converting the playability of the Tekken series into an accurately feeling version of the game on the Game Boy Advance.

It is admittedly very difficult to port over an elaborate fighter such as Tekken to a system that lacks any real 3D hardware, but that's exactly what Namco has set out to do. Instead of building a 3D engine on the system, the developers are instead working with the Game Boy Advance's own strengths to build the game up from scratch. The team has taken nine of the most popular characters in the Tekken universe, taken key frames of animation, and built pre-rendered versions of their polygonal console counterparts.

They move and act just like the characters do in the console series, the downside being that the camera can't flow around these models at any angle since they're technically flat 2D sprites. But that doesn't keep the camera static, as the Game Boy Advance hardware keeps the action dynamic by zooming in and out of the action depending on the position of the fighters. The floor and arena walls also rotate similarly to the console version thanks to the GBA's advanced background scaling and rotation capabilities...the developers have faked the look of Tekken extremely well on the handheld.

The gameplay has been modified, however. Though the Game Boy Advance features a four action button configuration, Namco's Tekken GBA development team have opted for a two-button control configuration for the handheld version. So the two punch/two kick layout has been modified into a more simplistic punch/kick fashion. But since the characters have been modeled after their console counterparts, most of their special moves and combination attacks can be pulled off in this configuration. Sidestepping can be controlled by tapping the D-pad at the right time, just like the arcade and console versions.

Courtesy of the Game Boy Advance's link capabilities, two players can duke it out in the portable version as if standing at the same machine in the arcade. But the bonus here is, each player gets his own screen to view the action. To take advantage of this feature, both players will need their own copy of the game. Hey, it's only fair.

It's going to be a close call if Tekken Advance is going to be a Christmas release -- the game will ship in Japan mid-December, which means that Namco only has a couple of days to ship the game in the US in order to make the holiday rush. But from what we've seen so far, the Game Boy Advance version of Tekken should be worth the wait.

– Craig Harris ■

Details ::

Publisher :: Namco
Developer :: Namco
# of Players :: 2
Release Date :: December 2001

GBA :: Preview
SHEEP

The games just keep getting more strange...but hey, folks need the wool.

So, you've exterminated Alien-invested space stations, won the grand prix, and saved the world more times than you can count. But, have you ever herded sheep?

Didn't think so.

Capcom's bringing the uniquely designed sheep herding game Sheep to the Game Boy Advance. Already released for the PlayStation and PC, the Game Boy Advance version is essentially the same game reduced for portable play for when you feel the need to command a group of ovines while on the road.

The game puts you in the role of a canine whose only role is to move sheep from one part of a farm to another. But these sheep have a mind of their own, so it takes quick legs and a violent bark to keep these guys in line as they'll stray off and get into trouble, finding their way into places which might not be a safe place to be (like under a moving tractor, for example). But you'll also have to make sure that they don't stampede over destructible objects.

The Game Boy Advance version of Sheep has a slightly different look, as the graphic style has been given more of an anime flavor due to the fact that Capcom is handling the portable conversion, which means that the odd European flair that made the original Sheep so darn weird on the PC and PlayStation may not make the cut.

The game will first release in Japan (obviously), followed by a winter ship date in the US.

-- Craig Harris ∎

Details ::

Publisher :: Capcom

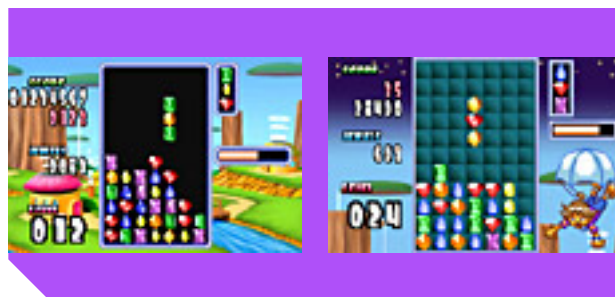**Developer ::** Capcom

 # Players :: 1

Release :: Winter 2002

GBA :: Preview
COLUMNS CROWN

A classic handheld game returns to try to become...a classic handheld game.

Years ago when companies were trying to steal portable market share from Nintendo and its black-and-white Game Boy, Sega had its Game Gear color handheld. And when Nintendo was giving away Tetris with its system, Sega tried the same thing with its own puzzle game: Columns. Well, the Game Gear faded away into portable gaming history, but Sega still thinks there's merit in the Columns design...as the company is bringing the game back as one of its initial games for the Game Boy Advance.

Columns is a simple puzzle game in the same vein as Tetris, where players control dropping stacks of three colored gems into a waiting bin. By forming lines of three or more of the same colored jewels up, down, or diagonal, the gems involved will explode out of play and the rest will settle into the bin...which can potentially cause a chain reaction, linking more jewels together and removing them out of the bin. The challenge is to keep this up until you can no longer fit any more gems in play.

The GBA version, known as Columns Crown, has been given a little more structure in its design, as the game revolves around a plotline where the characters must obtain stolen jewels by playing games of Columns. The new version also features several new modes of play, including a link cable two-player mode where only one player needs a copy of the game.
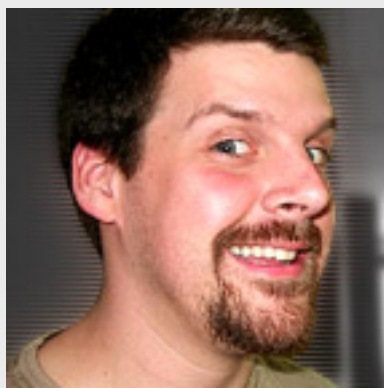
– Craig Harris ∎

Details ::

Publisher :: THQ

Developer :: Sega

 # Players :: 2

Release :: November 2001

pc :: *index*

Featured Preview ::
052 :: Mafia: La Cosa Nostra

Also In This Issue ::
053 :: Preview: Clusterball
054 :: Preview: Comanche 4

Steve Butts

This Month in PC ::

I was all set to write some cynical piece on how the holidays are full of stress and anxiety. I'd make a few cracks about Hallmark and Martha Stewart, complain about my family, and follow that up with a rant about how busy we are here at IGN during the holidays. But you know what? I *love* the holidays.

First, there are tons of games out there to choose from (high profile, high quality titles are timed to come out when the publishers know we're in our spendiest moods or making our "non-denominational, apolitical and secularized observance" lists), and in some sublime harmony of life, these two months are when many of us get to take some time away from school or work or hanging out at the unemployment office to enjoy some of these awesome games. And if a blizzard snows you in without cutting off your DSL service, then you've got it made.

Naturally, if when you read this there's been some horrible blizzard in the country and your DSL has been affected, I want to apologize in advance for my insensitivity.

For more PC news, reviews, previews, codes and more, visit **http://pc.ign.com.**

Preview :: Clusterball
Kooky *and* kinky: this ball's got it all.

Preview :: Comanche 4
Comanche's back with new control, and an engine as pretty as the helicopter is advanced.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Civilization III

2 :: Even more arguments about the Xbox and GameCube

3 :: Return to Castle Wolfenstein

4 :: A 1967 Dodge Charger

5 :: Sleep

Office Abuse ::
Over the past several weeks the other editors have been removing parts of Steve's computer and replacing them with fudge.

PC :: Preview

MAFIA: LA COSA NOSTRA

Hot mob on mob action in a beautifully grimy setting.

We've seen this game before. Over the past year or so we've tried to keep a close eye on it, always suspecting that it could be great but never really letting ourselves get set up for another Hidden and Dangerous. Just recently we got the chance to sit down and really take a look at several parts of the game in action and we've got to say, we're even more anxious to get our hands on a final.

This 1930's Chicago mobster action game combines realistic and natural environments with the classic cinematic action that we all associate with that era – or at least with the movies about that era. The hope is to set the player in a world reminiscent of *Goodfellas* or *The Untouchables*.

The player starts off running errands for his patrons, the Salieri crime family. You'll need to drive, shoot and sneak your way through more and more harrowing situations in each of the game's 20 missions. You'll need to prevent the mayor from giving a speech, protect a young lady from some hooligans, steal weapons to equip your "associates," enter races, shoot it out with another crew in a parking garage, and a ton of other mob-esque type tasks.

And like GTA 3 or Loose Cannon, this action all takes place in a living, breathing city that encompasses more than 12 square miles of terrain. Although the missions must be completed within a certain amount of time, there will be plenty of players who are just interested in exploring the city. Streetlights work (and are enforced by the city's men in blue), there are trolley cars, and there's even a tram that circles the city enabling you to get cross town relatively quickly. To top it all off, there are countless pedestrians all over the place going about their daily lives.

Everything's rendered through a really gorgeous engine as well. The look of the streets is suitably gritty and the

architecture, apparel and atmosphere have obviously been researched very thoroughly. The various districts of the city include downtown, Chinatown, and Little Italy. There's also a fairly large rural area outside of the city. The transition from the close and dingy confines of the city to the lush countryside with its rolling hills, trees and fences is handled superbly.

We should be getting some more hands on time with this one before the end of the year, so be sure to check IGNPC for a preview update. *– Steve Butts* ■
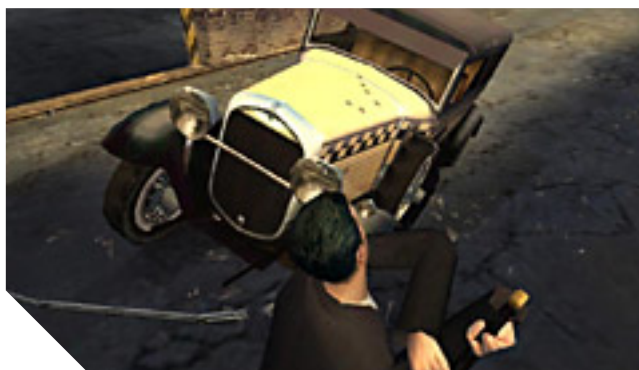
Details ::

Publisher :: TalonSoft
Developer :: Illusion Softworks
Genre :: Action
# of Players :: 4
Release Date :: January 2002

PC :: Preview
CLUSTERBALL
Kooky *and* kinky: this ball's got it all.

When I first heard that Strategy First had picked up Clusterball, I was at once both confused and aroused. This action-oriented flying game gives players a simple task -- gather up all the balls you can and fly them through a ring. While it's a simple proposition in itself, numerous power-ups, narrow spaces and other competitors make things a little more complicated.

Your ship can be flown from either a third or first-person perspective as you negotiate the various arenas. The goal is to collect various balls scattered about the level. The balls themselves are always placed on the ground, and since you're in a high-speed aircraft, you want to make sure you can grab the balls without crashing into the landscape. Thankfully, the balls are on special platforms that allow you to "skate" across the surface, allowing you to pick them up without fear of crashing. In order to earn points you've got to fly through a big central ring to drop your balls off.

To help you even the score a bit (and ward off the more competitive players) Clusterball also offers several weapons. The basic cannon can be used to destroy your enemies' ships. All sorts of guided missile pickups grant you various other abilities: some steal your opponent's balls while others reverse his or her controls. At any point, you can drop one of your balls to throw off any guided missiles.

The game currently has eleven separate levels drawn from a range of locations. In the Egyptian level, players must fly in and around the various pyramids and monuments of the desert. Since most of them seem pretty solid, it's best not to fly right into them. Castles, lighthouses, and big ol' triptychs populate the Stonehenge level. Getting a feel for the flow of the level is important, and, if you're any good, you'll try to seek out a line that carries you from one row of balls to another in as short a time as possible.

The Metropolactica level sounds like it might be some futuristic, neon cityscape, but it's more squat and brown. Still, flying in and out among the buildings and bridges in your quest for balls is pretty boss. In contrast, the Taj Mahal and Stonehenge levels provide ample opportunity for some wide-open competition. Other levels will take players to Easter Island, the Yucatan, Bora Bora, China, Ruhrmansk and even the surface of the moon (the fun of flying beneath the surface of the moon is presumably lacking).

Arcade-style flyers like Clusterball are pretty rare on the PC these days. Since last year's Airfix Dogfighter there really haven't been any titles that really capture the quirky and approachable essence of arcade-style flying games. With a bit of optimization and some graphic upgrades, Clusterball could fit the bill perfectly. **-- Steve Butts** ∎
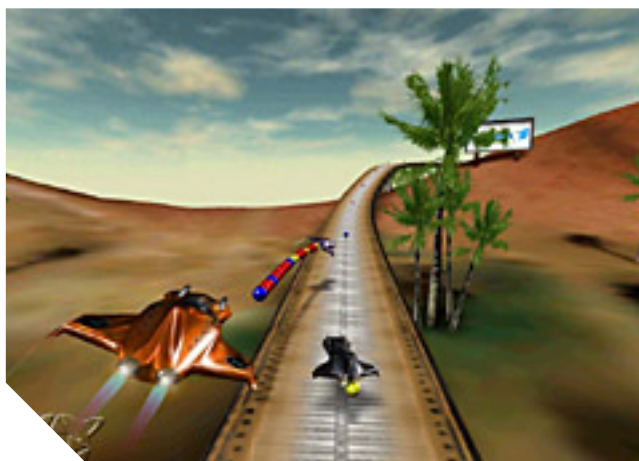
Details ::

Publisher ::	Strategy First
Developer ::	Daydream Software
Genre ::	Sports
# of Players ::	8
Release Date ::	December 2001

PC :: Preview
COMANCHE 4

Camanche's back with new control, and an engine as pretty as the helicopter is advanced.

Software trails hardware. At least, it seems this is the case in the sorted love affair between our graphics hardware and the games that run off them. As graphics manufacturers such as ATI and NVIDIA strive to be first out of the gates, offering up what they claim to be the best, the fastest, and the most robust feature sets, we gamers are always left with severely overpowered cards whose $400 bells and whistles go largely unheard. "But these cards are for the future," they'd say attempting to obtain, with little bravado, some justification of their purchase. Well my friends, the future is now, the future is Comanche, and if NovaLogic has its way, that money you blew will no longer go to waste.

Comanche 4 forms up with other next-generation titles such as Aquanox in that its graphical mission is to take full advantage of what today's top-of-the-line hardware can offer, regardless of how few people will actually be able to utilize its fullest potential. But for those who can, this military helicopter action/sim already shows a degree of aesthetic polish and luster that just plain works.

We've been waiting three years since the previously voxel-based Comanche Gold to once again drop our grubby butts into another RAH-66 Boeing-Sikorsky Comanche attack helicopter. But sloppily voxel-based this one is not. Comanche 4 liberally uses color, vast landscapes, texturing, particle effects, miscellaneous graphical wonders, and polygons to draw and convey a very believable, very next-gen world.

Reflections contort and ripple on lapping water; layers of textures are placed atop one another to create movement effects such as the rotor wash; particle effects and lighting are all extensively put into action; and the environments are no longer barren stretches of rolling hills, but are now instead dotted with expansive 'scapes of flora inhabited by fully articulated enemies (read your prey).

In fact, everything from enemy tanks to copters, to foot soldiers are all articulated polygonal models, though you'll rarely get to appreciate the detail spent on each of these as you whiz buy laying down round after round of bullets and rockets alike. What you will get to appreciate, however, are the intense explosions that result from the majority of their deaths. I am a connoisseur of gaming explosions, from the better: Freespace 2, to the worse: Rogue Squadron, I've seen them all and these certainly fall at the upper end of the ladder.

With a newly refined control scheme that allows for both the grip of joysticks as well as the precision and intuitiveness of a mouse and keyboard combination, Comanche 4 looks intent upon adding its name to the annals of other graphically astute, quality action/sims such as MechWarrior 4 when it's released later this month. **– Steve Butts** ■

Details ::

Publisher ::	NovaLogic
Developer ::	NovaLogic
Genre ::	Action
# of Players ::	16
Release Date ::	November 2001

entertainment :: *index*

Sarah Kuhn

This Month in Entertainment ::

So I think there's one thing we can all agree on: the theme song from Enterprise really, really sucks. Note to UPN: keep the nudity, ditch the music.

Why, some folks have even gone so far as to picket outside of the Paramount lot – no joke. It's kind of too bad, really. The show, while not the great savior of the franchise we might have imagined it to be, is watchable and occasionally even enjoyable. Yet I've heard many a dedicated fellow Trekkie tell me that after the first few notes of that theme song, well...they're off to another channel, and are maybe even watching Dawson's Creek.

This sort of thing is not only an example of the legendary Trekkie nitpickiness, but also of the inherent problem that continues to plague Trek: the fans want this new series to be different...but not too different.

Me? I can get by. The theme song (which, for the record, is "Faith of the Heart," performed by Russell Watson) ain't nearly as painful to my brain as is James Van Der Beek's massive forehead.

Coming soon...
http://entertainment.ign.com

056

:: DVD

057

:: MOVIES

058

:: TV

059

:: COMICS

060

BANTAM**BA350**
MPIO**DMG 128**
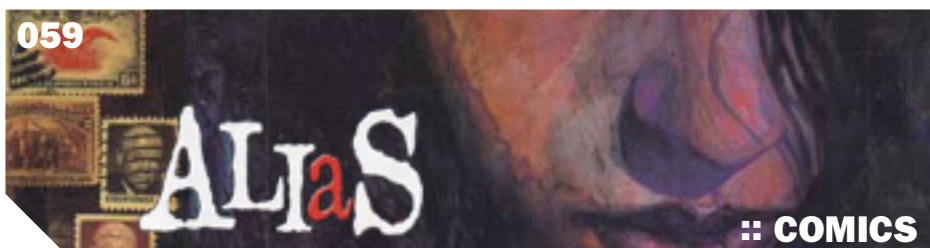
:: GEAR

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Angel Series 1 action figures (Faith, Angel and Cordy)

2 :: *Blue Monday: Absolute Beginners* trade paperback

3 :: *Couscous Express* by Brian Wood

4 :: *Justice League* on Cartoon Network

5 :: Astrogirl Kubrick

Office Abuse ::
Sarah Kuhn is the fourth Powerpuff Girl.

entertainment :: *dvd*

DVD :: Preview
WILLOW ::
Special Edition

The Ron Howard/Lucasfilm fantasy epic is finally arriving on DVD this November, and the THX-certified disc will include a couple great features to keep fans of the flick happy.

DISC FEATURES ::
- 2.35:1 Anamorphic Widescreen video.
- English Dolby Digital 5.1, English Dolby Digital 2.0, Spanish Dolby Digital 2.0.
- Audio Commentary by Ron Howard and Warwick Davis.
- Brand-new effects documentary detailing the groundbreaking effects used in the film (it was the first to use the "morphing" effect".
- "Making of an Adventure" documentary.
- Effects featurette that was done back when the film was released.
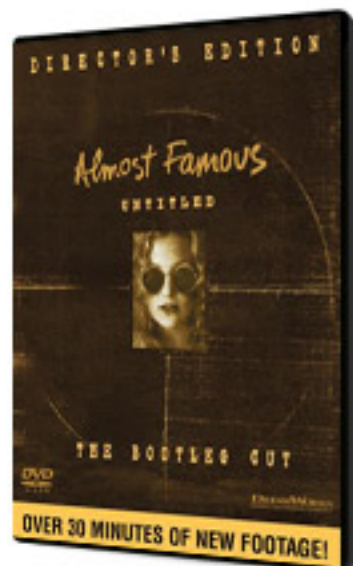- Trailers.
- TV Spots.
- Still Gallery.

Movie Info ::
Price :: $26.99

Release :: November 27, 2001

DVD :: Preview
ALMOST FAMOUS UNTITLED ::
The Bootleg Cut (Director's Edition)

Cameron Crowe's semi-autobiographical tale of a young man hitting the road with a rock band in the 70's saw release on DVD earlier this year, but now the film is getting the "treatment" in an excellent three-disc director's cut.

DISC FEATURES ::
- 1.85:1 Anamorphic Widescreen video.
- English Dolby Digital 5.1, English DTS, English Dolby Digital 2.0.

DISC ONE ::
- *Almost Famous Untitled - The Bootleg Cut* with 36 minutes of never-before-seen footage.

DISC TWO ::
- Original Theatrical Cut.
- Cameron Crowe Audio Commentary.
- Deleted Scenes w/ Commentary.
- Cameron Crowe's Top 10 Albums of 1973.
- Cast audition tapes and rock&roll rehersal footage.
- Original shooting script with Cameron Crowe's notes.
- Stillwater concert with six original songs.
- Cameron Crowe's original Rolling Stone articles.
- Trailer.
- New menu music created by Nancy Wilson.

DISC THREE ::
- Music CD featuring six Stillwater songs.

Movie Info ::
Price :: $34.99

Release :: December 4, 2001

FilmForce Movie :: Preview
NOVOCAINE ::
Crime isn't just for criminals anymore

Artisan Entertainment brings us *Novocaine*, by writer-director David Atkins (*Arizona Dream*). The film stars Steve Martin, but don't get the wrong idea, *Novocaine* isn't a comedy. It's billed as an edgy, unpredictable crime thriller.   Martin plays Frank Sangster, a prosperous dentist whose life seems almost perfect. He has a wonderful home and is happily engaged to his dental hygenist, Jean (Laura Dern). But things begin to unravel for Dr. Sangster when he meets Susan Ivy (Helena Bonham-Carter), a seductive new patient with an insatiable appetite for painkillers. Before long, drugs are missing from his office, Susan's psychotic brother Duane (Scott Caan) is stalking him, and Frank finds himself wanted by the DEA and the police for drug trafficking and murder. As he runs from authorities, Frank becomes increasingly drawn to Susan, and through her learns that he's the victim of an elaborate con, which may also involve his wayward brother, Harlan (Elias Koteas). Driven to create a new life for himself and Susan, Frank plunges into the seedy underworld of sex, drugs and murder in order to prove his innocence. Ultimately he finds that breaking the law might be his one and only hope for freedom. *– Brian Linder* ■

Movie Info ::

Genre :: Thriller

Rating :: R

Release :: 11/16/01 (in select cities)

Starring :: Steve Martin,
Helena Bonham-Carter

Director :: David Atkins

FilmForce Movie :: Preview
HARRY POTTER ::
Do you believe in magic?

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, or *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* as it's known everywhere but North America (publishing marketers thought American children would never buy a book with the word "philosopher" in the title) is an adaptation of author J.K. Rowling's first book chronicling the adventures of Harry Potter, a boy who learns on his eleventh birthday that he is the orphaned son of two powerful wizards and possesses unique magical powers of his own. He is summoned from his miserable life as an unwanted child to become a student at Hogwarts, an English boarding school for wizards. There he meets several friends who become his closest allies and help him discover the truth about his parents' mysterious deaths at the hands of a powerful and mysterious adversary, the evil Lord Voldemort.

You mean you're not already in line? As I've said before, if this film doesn't end up with the highest-grossing opening weekend of all time I will personally eat a shoe (a Birkenstock sandal, size 11) on my webcam for all the world to see. *– Brian Linder* ■

Movie Info ::

Genre :: Fantasy, Adventure

Rating :: PG

Release :: 11/16/01

Starring :: Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson

Director :: Chris Columbus

TV :: Review

ANGEL GETS HIS WINGS

Clearly, the show you should be watching this season is *Angel*.
(*Angel* - *The WB* - *Monday's @ 9pm*)

Enterprise is amiable but blah, *The Tick* has yet to premiere and The *X-Files* may as well be re-titled *Scully is Tired*.

Clearly, the show you should be watching this season is *Angel*.

I know, I know…the series is constantly identified as *Buffy*'s little brother, kinda like that troubled younger sibling who never quite grows out of Older Sis' shadow, what with all of her medals and honors and perfect teeth. But so far this season, I gotta admit, the Buffster's leaving me a little cold. After the big defection to UPN, her resurrection wasn't quite the earth-shattering moment it should have been, and the show's been mired by doom 'n' gloom ever since.

Meanwhile, *Angel*, now in its third season, is standing on its own two feet over on The WB. The diverse, prickly cast of characters is only growing more and more fascinating as each of them is carefully shaded with snappy writing: broody leading man Angel (David Boreanaz), sassy bitch-goddess Cordelia (Charisma Carpenter), weary Brit boss Wesley (Alexis Denisof), charismatic demon-hunter Gunn (J. August Richards) and delicate new addition Fred (Amy Acker) have all been gifted with shiny scenes that are perfectly tuned to each of their distinctive skills.

And let's not forget the wonderfully diva-esque, green karaoke demon Lorne (Andy Hallett) and Angel's ever-scheming vampiric ex-paramour Darla (Julie Benz) who's now somehow *pregnant*. Way to throw us a big, fat curveball, you wily writers! This little tidbit is even juicier than when they brought Darla back from the dead in the first place.

Somehow, this unlikely batch of misfit toys has gelled completely this year, making for a fine-tuned ensemble of winning personalities. Take, for example, the recent scene wherein Wesley and Cordelia re-enacted the painfully pathos-laden drama of the famous Buffy/Angel relationship: "I almost forgot to brood," sighs Wes. "Bite me!" shrieks Cordelia. Never has the B/A dynamic been so perfectly – and hysterically – deconstructed.

There's also the constant threat of the nefarious law firm Wolfram and Hart, this year represented mostly by slinky, buttoned-up beauty Lilah (Stephanie Romanov). Whereas during the past two seasons we've struggled to learn what W&H is all about, this year the threat feels real, established.

We know they mean business, and it makes Angel's world just a tiny bit more dangerous.

In addition to all of this fine character development, there are tons of little flourishes that I can barely keep track of: the nasty-lookin' demon named Skip, for example. How random and brilliant is that?

I have no doubt that *Buffy* will re-gain its dramatic footing as the season wears on, but for now, it's nice to see *Angel* developing in its own right, perfectly balancing humor, pathos, and a plot that's designed to keep us hooked throughout the entire year.

Looks like Little Bro has finally grown up.   *– Sarah Kuhn* ∎

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: **Fred (Amy Acker), Wesley (Alexis Denisof), Angel (David Boreanaz), Cordelia (Charisma Carpenter), Gunn (J. August Richards).**

entertainment :: *comics*

Comics :: Review
ALIAS #1 ::
The mean streets of Marvel.

Writer ::
Brian Michael Bendis

Artist ::
Michael Gaydos

Publisher ::
Marvel (MAX imprint)

Fittingly enough, the first word in the first title of Marvel's "mature readers" MAX line is...uh, well actually I can't even say what it says here, the closest I can get is "#$@%!"

Anyway, if this is what the MAX books are gonna be like, sign me up -- and not just because of all the profanity and sex (there's a scene in #1 that puts Power Man in a rather...'compromising' situation). No, it's the ease with which these jaded characters populate the mean streets of a much grittier Marvel Universe than the one we're used to seeing that has me intrigued.

Here, Jessica Jones, ex-superhero, is a PI running Alias Investigations. In the opening ish, the caustic Jessica takes on a case involving an expensively-attired woman's missing sister, who apparently hooked up with a mysterious dream guy, then disappeared. Jessica finds the sister easily, but once she does she's in for one hell of a surprise.

This is an incredibly promising book, hard-edged without being cliched or annoyingly pretentious. Gaydos' art matches the tone perfectly, and the whole thing has the feel of a rougher Vertigo-type book...only with the swearing. Good deal. *-- Sarah Kuhn* ∎

Comics :: Review
DOOM PATROL #1 ::
Gen 13 for the Generation X set.

Writer ::
John Arcudi

Penciler ::
Tan Eng Huat

Publisher ::
DC

DC must really want to keep its copyrights alive. Just last month it brought back the Suicide Squad, and now here comes the Doom Patrol, which hasn't been spotted (with the exception of Elseworld's books) since the mid-90s. Good book, yes, but not exactly a popular one. I hope this isn't the case with this version.

Like Suicide Squad, the book picks up in current times, when the original team's disbanded or gone. One of the remaining members, Robotman, is now working in a chemical plant, doing all the really dirty scutwork. Meanwhile, some really, really rich guy is trying to kick off his hot young superhero team, Justice Inc. Unfortunately, they're not ready for prime time, so the tycoon hired Robotman as a consultant.

Funny, yes? Arcudi's writing is cheeky and subversive. Only someone well into his or her late 20s would recognize that Justice Inc. used to be a really bad comic in Marvel's New Universe line. If you didn't know that, it probably wouldn't even register in your subconscious. Doom Patrol's littered with little tidbits and digs at older comics -- it's the first time I can remember that the older you are, the funnier the comic is. Oh, and the new artist, Tan Eng Huat, is very good. He's got a little *Marshal Law* mixed in with *Tenchi Muyo* and *Gen 13*. It's an international style, and it works well with Arcudi's writing.

This is worth buying the first time around. *– Jeff Chen* ∎

RATING :: **BUY IT!**

BUY IT! **:: RATING**

entertainment :: *gear*

best MP3 PORTABLE

Gear :: Review

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE

The Bantam BA350 and MPIO-DMG square off for the "Best MP3 Portable" title.

Regular IGN Gear readers know that the next wave of portables is upon us. At the front of the pack are two players that people ask me about every day: the Bantam BA350 ($199.00) and the MPIO-DMG 128 ($220.00). I've posted full reviews of each model, but I thought I'd give you Insiders a little tête-à-tête between these two contenders.

FEATURES ::

Each player has 128MB of internal memory with a memory slot (SmartMedia for the DMG and MMC for the BA350). While memory is a vital statistic, it alone does not an MP3 player make. Both also use a USB interface, have upgradeable firmware, and come with nice accessory packages.

The BA350 boasts on-the-fly WMA encoding. This means that you can convert your 128kbps MP3s to 64kbps WMAs, which sound almost as good, and have four hours of music with you. The BA350 is the only player on the market with this useful feature. The BA350 also uses a sophisticated internal battery: it charges through the USB port, so you don't have several cables mucking up your desktop.

The DMG, however, has both voice recording and a beautiful, backlit LCD. The screen is far superior to the BA350's, which scrolls too slowly and doesn't show enough info. The DMG also has a neat PIM (Personal Information Manager) that lets you store names, numbers, and short notes for each entry.

This is a tough call, but I think the BA350 edges out the DMG...but not by much. The rechargeable battery goes a long way compared to a standard AA. The PIM and LCD are important, but not as essential as power.

DESIGN ::

The players are very different in terms of design and layout. Bantam centered on size, while Digital Global Networks, the makers of the DMG, made usability a priority.

The DMG uses a side-mounted joystick for most navigation. This scheme is not only highly innovative, but it also works extremely well. You simply move the joystick up or down to maneuver and push it in to make a selection.

However, the BA350 is extremely tiny, noticeably smaller than a credit card in length and width. As impressive as the DMG's interface is, I think size is more important when it comes to portable electronics. And for this reason I think Bantam takes this category as well.

OVERALL ::

Obviously I pick the BA350. However, I could easily accept someone else choosing the DMG, as the players are very close in most regards. Again, size is important to me, and the BA is microscopic, but if you can live with a slightly larger player, and don't care about the WMA encoding, then the DMG would be the one for you. *– Mike Wiley* ∎

BANTAM**BA350**

MPIO**DMG 128**

Chris "El Sexo" Carle

This Month in Codes ::

It's November and a new day is dawning. Two powerful consoles make their debuts this month, and that can only mean one thing--my bank account is going to look sadder than a eunuch at a nudist colony. That aside, it's a great month to be alive. Two new consoles mean more games than you can shake a stick at, and given the stellar line-up of stuff coming out for the PS2, this may be the best month ever in video game history.

This month's codes section brings you a batch of steaming hot Xbox codes, ripe for launch. For those of you looking for GameCube cheats, take a look at the October Unplugged Codes Blowout. Since we're deep into the college football season--and you're probably deep into your season of NCAA College Football 2002--we've also included a full guide to the off season.

Editor's Note: Let me take this opportunity to thank you for the overwhelming support for last month's Codes issue of Unplugged. Your positive feedback is what makes my job worth doing.

For more codes, guides, hookers & more, visit **http://codes.ign.com.**
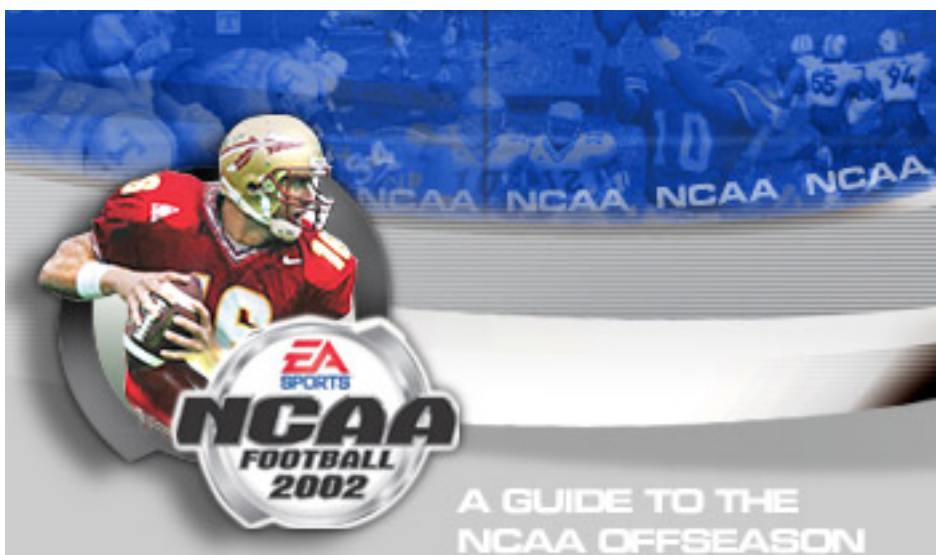
Featured Guide ::

062 :: **NCAA College Football 2002**
A guide to the NCAA Offseason

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2
Signature tricks, all levels, all bikes, and competition outfits UNLOCKED!

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X
THPS 2X career, Subway level, Spider-Man, and more UNLOCKED!

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: NFL 2K2 (PS2)

2 :: Harvest Moon (PS2)

3 :: Legends of Wrestling (PS2)

4 :: Wreckless (Xbox)

5 :: GUNVALKYRIE (Xbox)

Office Abuse ::
Chris' favorite album of all time is Guns N' Roses "Appetite For Destruction." Yes, he's a butt rock king!

A GUIDE TO THE NCAA OFFSEASON

Any sports game of the new millennium worth its weight in plastic simply has to have some kind of management aspect to it. Just because EA Sports' NCAA Football 2002 focuses on the college game, doesn't mean there isn't business to be taken care of. The game boasts one of the most robust Dynasty modes in any sports game available today, and that means there's plenty to do once a national champion has been crowned. If you weren't that national champion then that means you've got a lot of work ahead of you. While you don't have to find a way to sneak SUVs and new sneakers to high school recruits, the offseason schedule in NCAA 2002 can be just as engaging and definitely has a machiavellian appeal.

This super comprehensive offseason walk-through has been conveniently arranged by topic so that you can immediately hop to the section that concerns you. And we recommend this course of action too, because reading the whole thing really just takes you away from playing the game. So read, don't skim, our NCAA 2002 walk-through before you have to suffer through another embarrassing recruiting class, because championship dynasties are built in the spring.

DON'T LET THE DOOR HIT YOU ON THE WAY OUT

▼

After the Sears trophy has been handed out, all of the congratulatory handshakes given and received, and all of the cheerleaders have been hugged and kissed, it's already time to get down to business in building your squad for the next season.

The first task on your list is to find out who's not going to be joining you in the fall. The "Players Leaving" list gives you a rundown on all of the seniors, juniors, and even sophomores that are leaving school and heading to the riches of the NFL, the purgatory of the CFL, or the training program at the local fast food eating establishment. Now it's obvious why the seniors are taking off, but the juniors and sophomores are leaving town for one reason and one reason only: they're damn good. Typically we're talking about offensive players here. On the defensive side of the ball, even with guys that put up outstanding interception or sack numbers, the best players

t e n d ▶

Off-Season Schedule

- Players Leaving ①
- Recruiting ②
- Training Results ③
- Cut Players ④
- Redshirt Players ⑤
- Set Depth Chart ⑥
- Start New Season ⑦

⊙ HELP   SELECT ⊗

to play out all of their eligibility. It's the receiver or running back that's dying for playing time that will get antsy and take their skills to the pros. If your best running back is a sophomore and you need him to run like crazy so you'll actually have a chance to win, he'll have no problem bolting if he puts up monster stats along the way.

So you'd think spreading the ball around and not relying on one stud would be the way to keep all of the skill players on your team happy. But that just isn't the case. If you've got three backs or three receivers with ratings of 90 or above, you're going to use all of them during your run for the national championship because they're damn good, right? The problem is, they start believing it too.

In one scenario I saw my two junior receivers and one redshirt sophomore all put up NFL caliber receiving numbers to the point where they were all vying for the Heisman Trophy at one time or another. After winning the national championship, all three of them split. Now it's easy to accept a junior wideout who had 80 catches and 19 touchdowns leaving for the NFL, but the other two guys weren't even close to his numbers. The soph did maybe 60 catches and 14 TDs, while the other junior went for 40 and 9. Obviously, the passing game was the team strength, and in real life most underclassmen receivers would want to stay in such a system until they get their chance in a year or two to be the feature performer. As the coach you're supposed to be able to count on the other two players sticking around so you can come back with a strong passing attack the next season.

But players do grow up, they do get better, and they do leave. And you're not seriously going to hold back on your offense just to keep a few star players happy, right? Heck no! You're going to open it up, score lots of touchdowns, win games, and just reload in the offseason. If the computer is going to have underclassmen #3 wide receivers go pro, then you can surely find a way to keep your dynasty growing.

JUST SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE, SON

The Recruiting Period is the meat, potatoes, and tasty brown gravy of the offseason schedule. This is where you get the players that you'll be using in the foreseeable future, so it is extremely important to pay attention to what's going on during recruiting. This is a football videogame, and it's a lot more fun if you're playing with good players than crappy walk-ons.

While in the Recruiting Period you can always hit the circle button to bring up a comprehensive roster chart. It tells you how many players you have at each position, their class, how many prospects you're chasing, which prospects have signed to your school, and how many scholarships you have available. This chart will become extremely important to you because it will tell you where you need to concentrate your recruiting efforts. If you have a bunch of seniors and juniors on your offensive line, you know you're going to be good to go for the upcoming season, but you may want to try to pick up one or two youngsters that you can develop into starters. If you see you have one sophomore and one freshman running back on your roster, you know you've got youth at that position, but those two players could very well suck, which is a lot like not having them at all.

You get five weeks to recruit players. During each of those weeks you have to first target the players you want to pursue that week and then determine how you're going to pursue them. There are several handy menus to help organize the hundreds of prospects that are out there. ▶

STATE PROSPECTS ::
A list of all of the prospects from the state where your school is located.

RECRUITING TARGETS ::
The players to whom you've offered scholarships. After week one, it will still list them even if they've committed to other schools.

NATIONAL TOP 100 ::
A list of the top 100 players in the nation regardless of position. All of them are blue chip prospects as designated by the five stars next to their names.

ALL RECRUITS ::
Just like it says, this is the massive list of every school kid and junior college player that wants a scholarship to play ball.

INTERESTED RECRUITS ::
The most helpful list. It includes all of the players, both good and bad, who want to come to your school.

So now that we know how to find the players, the question is what are we looking for? To put it simply, you want the best guys you can get. The first list you want to hit is the Interested Recruits list. There should always be a few guys here who are actually worth the time. Your best bet is to scroll through and find any and all blue chippers and get after them. Even if you already have four good QBs, if there's a blue chip prospect that has your school listed as his first choice, you'll want to recruit him. A blue chip player that's interested in your school is basically a gift from the football videogame gods, so just take it and don't ask any questions. That's the easiest part of recruiting, however. It only gets tougher after that.

A prospect's interest in your school is determined by location (local guys like the local universities, just like everybody else), the school's prestige as a football powerhouse, and the coach's prestige. You can check your prestige ratings under the coach's rating menu at anytime. You can usually figure out the school's location by its name. If you're using Rice, SMU, or Air Force you'll be forced to actually pay attention to the

announcers when you play your home games, but it's your own fault for choosing such a complicated university.

You're now officially in the rough part of recruiting. You've got the interested blue chippers (players who are good AND who want to go to your school) taken care of, but there are other good players and interested guys out there that aren't as easy to find. And all of this, of course, has been forged by whatever your team's needs are.

Your next stop should be the National Top 100 menu. Whatever your team's needs are, it's worth it to take a look here and see if there are any guys here that are interested. Even if a prospect doesn't have your school listed in his top three (whichever school's listed first has the best chance of landing him) his interest level can range from Very High to High to Average to Low to Very Low. He's already a blue chipper, so if he fulfills a need and his interest is either Very High or High, you've got to go after him. You can take a chance on a guy that doesn't like your school at all, but you've got to go after him with everything you've got from the very first week of recruiting and keep it up all five weeks. These high school and juco players know how important they are, so it's not uncommon for the blue chipper to wait until the last minute to sign with a school. ▶

This is a good time to define what we mean by "going after" a prospect. When you find that awesome 6'4" receiver with great hands and blazing speed, you'll select him and the resources menu will pop up. Here you'll have four activities that you can act out during that week of recruiting: Head Coach Visit for 8 points, Assistant Coach Visit for 4 points, Head Coach Call for 2 points, and Assistant Coach Call for 1 point. For any blue chipper, you'll have to do all four activities every week until he signs even if it's a guy who has your school ranked as his favorite. In fact, you should go all out for any player you want, even the second and third tier guys, as often as the budget allows. This isn't free agency, so you can't see what dollar amounts other schools are offering. If the guy is good, rest assured that all of his top three schools are going after him with zeal.

The points are deducted from your recruiting pool of points, which is again determined by your school's prestige and your coach's prestige. Notre Dame, Nebraska, or Miami coming off a national championship year will have at least 260 recruiting points to work with. Prairie View A&M, only three years removed from snapping their 80 game losing streak, could have Knute Rockne as head coach and it wouldn't help their recruiting point total. You can spend the same number of recruiting points each week during the recruiting period, but you'll have to budget wisely during the first and second weeks because there are so many prospects out there.

Again, the first week of recruiting is crucial. Whomever you ignore during the first week will be hard to win over later on in the recruiting period. If you dis a blue chipper during the first week, don't even bother looking at his name after that. More importantly, it's the second tier guys, the ones with four and three star ratings who can actually contribute to your team, that will drive you crazy in the early going. There's only one dilemma when it comes to recruiting – who is worthwhile – but it brings up a variety of problems.

Take this scenario for example. You're extremely thin at receiver and cornerback, two positions where you should always recruit heavily as it is, but you've only got a blue chip quarterback and blue chip fullback who want to come to your school. You have one QB on your roster already that's decent but injury prone, plus you're not sure how much he's going to improve over this offseason. Since you already know your pass-

ing game is a question mark, that awesome fullback prospect could help out your running game considerably, since he can block for your badass senior tailback. On the other hand, you know defense wins championships, and you've got to recruit 6 or 7 cornerbacks to come away with 3 or 4 decent ones. Plus if you improve your defensive line, you can put more pressure on the opposing quarterback, which can negate the lack of talent you have at cornerback.

What do you do? *

The truth is I don't know because everybody has a different style of play, but you can expect situations just like that when you first dip into the recruiting period. One thing you can do is really research the players you're recruiting. Hitting the select button while highlighting any recruit will give you his scouting report, which includes his hometown, height, weight, grade point average, times in the 40 yard dash, bench press numbers, and position specific attributes like hands for a receiver or accuracy for a quarterback.

The 40-yard dash times can help you extrapolate what his speed will be once the season rolls around. Anything below 4.3 in the 40 will give you 89 speed and up. This is still a videogame, and it is built on the Madden framework, so speed still kills.

The GPA will give you their awareness. The closer to 4.00 the better, especially if we're talking about offensive linemen or defensive backs: players who do a lot of stuff without us controlling them. Awareness for QBs isn't as important, since we'll be making most of the decisions for them; likewise with running backs. Avoid guys whose GPAs are below 3.00 unless they're extremely fast. There's always a place on a football team for a thickheaded guy with 95 speed. How do you think Florida State and Miami built their dynasties?

As you progress from week to week in the recruiting period, those visits and phone calls by your coaches will yield additional information about the prospect. As a rule of thumb, disregard this info. It's usually repetitive blather about how the guy will develop once he's in college and what's influencing his decision about selecting a school. You've already sunk a week of recruiting into him. You're not going to stop recruiting this guy so you can go after some other player

that you've previously ignored.

Scouting reports don't tell you what a guy's agility, acceleration, toughness, resistance to injury, ball carrying ability or leaping ability will be. It may not seem like a big deal, but you'll gain a new appreciation for those minor attributes when you have a halfback with 98 speed who can't hold onto the ball, or a mammoth defensive tackle that gets a concussion every other game.

Once you've lined up all of your targets for week one you'll advance to week two where you can see who has signed and who hasn't. After the first week, you're hoping some of the pieces will have fallen into place. Even if a guy you were pursuing has signed with another school, at least you know not to worry about him anymore and you can focus on the other remaining prospects at that position. This is where the Recruiting Targets menu becomes your best friend. If you were lucky you spent week one shelling out scholarship offers all around the country, and now this menu can help you keep track of all those guys quickly and easily. If you want to continue your recruiting efforts for that outstanding linebacker, you can just pop into this menu, sort to the list of linebackers, and re-assign your head coach and assistant activities quickly and easily. Better yet, you can see who has signed and where. If you see that you actually landed one of your targets after week one it will be listed here at the bottom of the list. Finding out one of your highly touted recruits actually signed with you can make you feel like the ugly girl at the school dance that suddenly has all of the cool guys fawning over her in one of those after-school specials.

Likewise, finding out a guy you simply had to have was signed by another school will make you feel like the janitor at that school dance mumbling to himself about rotten ungrateful kids. Just get out a handy little notebook and write down the name of the school that swiped him from you. Then hope that you play them next season so you can cripple him for his insolence, putting his injury rating to the test.

Eventually, after at least 90 minutes of scouring the depths of America for football players, you'll be done with recruiting. It's Signing Day, and you get to fawn over the new crew of players you've been fighting and losing sleep over. There's no going back at this point; you have who you have, but you'll be happy it's over, nonetheless. If you still have roster spots

available, you'll automatically get some walk-on players to fill out your 55-man roster. If you have more than 55 players on your roster, it's time to get cutting.

DON'T LET THE DOOR HIT YOU PART II

Cut all of the sucky players that you don't like, don't want, or don't need. If you can afford to, do most of your cutting on the offensive side of the ball so you'll have plenty of defensive players left over to play special teams. Safeties and linebackers are better tacklers, so it's good to have depth at these positions.

TRY THIS ON FOR SIZE

For those who don't know, "redshirting" is sitting out a year from the team whilst not losing one of the four years of eligibility. Usually a team will redshirt a freshman player to give him a chance to get accustomed to college life, sharpen up his studies, or to give him time to develop his football skills. You don't have to redshirt a freshman, especially if he's big enough or talented enough to contribute immediately, which is usually the case in NCAA 2002.

It's more likely that you'll redshirt a player at a position where you have a lot of depth. If you have a junior and a senior QB who are both awesome players and you just recruited another freshman stud, there's no sense in keeping the freshman on the bench. He's probably not going to play because of the guys ahead of him, so why waste a year of his eligibility? Redshirt him for a year, and next season he can be the backup QB as a redshirt freshman. This way he still has all four years of eligibility remaining. Now if disaster befalls your first two QBs you can pull the frosh off the redshirt list and put him on your active roster, which forfeits that redshirt year for him. He's got to play out all four consecutive years now.

Also, you can redshirt a player in any year. If you like the way your junior linebacker has developed and you know you've got a sophomore linebacker who's going to be a gamer as well, you can make sure they play their last two seasons side by side by redshirting the junior. You take the lump this season by holding back a talented player, but you'll have two

awesome guys going for you the next season and the season after that.

You can only redshirt a player during the offseason, but you can bring a guy off the redshirt list during the season. It's better to put a guy on there knowing you can take him off later than to miss the opportunity to sit a player when you had the chance. Also, players will develop and improve their skills during their redshirt year, so it's almost like you're getting an extra year of ratings boost by redshirting a player at some point during his college career.

SPRING FOOTBALL

When you get to Training Camp, it's not as exciting as it sounds. You don't get to run drills and actually improve a guy's stats. The computer does that for you. It's here that you'll see how your veterans have progressed from the last year. Overall player ratings can improve by as much as six points from year to year, if a player is open to coaching. Of course, you only know this if you were reading the scouting reports during the recruiting period. See how that can come back and haunt you?

You can usually count on getting 3 or 4 points added to a guy's overall rating each year, since basically every player gets a boost in his awareness. Unfortunately, you don't see players making dramatic improvements in an area of weakness. If your left tackle was injury prone when he got to school, he's going to be injury prone as a senior as well. Remember, players only get three or four offseasons to improve, and you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. While I don't know why you'd want to make anything out of a sow's ear, I do know that a player's awareness, accuracy (throwing or kicking), strength, and agility will usually improve across the board, even if it's only by a point or two.

RE-ORDER DEPTH CHART

There's nothing too special about organizing your depth chart during the offseason, since you can just change it at anytime during the season, or even during a game for that matter. But if you're the anal retentive type, go ahead and set your lineup so that you can focus on other stuff during the season and

during games – like how to stop UCLA's running attack.

One thing that you can't do during the offseason is change player information. You have to actually start the regular season before you can change a player's jersey number, name, or physical appearance. I bring this up because the wide-open college football numbering system is one of the most appealing aspects of the game. You're not limited to 80-89 for receivers or 0-20 for QBs. Your new recruits will have numbers assigned to them, and they pretty much follow the NFL number assignments, which can be a real drag. Have some fun and give your guys some nutty numerals to wear during the season. A QB that wears #53 or a kicker that wears #67 is what college ball is all about.

And just like that you're done. You've made it through the offseason, picked up some new players, go rid of some wack ones, and you now have a sunny new outlook on the upcoming season. Congratulations, and be sure to comeback to the pages of IGN Unplugged when the next offseason rolls around.

* Getting back to that little recruiting scenario, I said you always, ALWAYS get the blue chippers who want to come to your school. Let the players dictate your style of play. If the football gods are giving you a QB and a fullback, you take 'em and build your team around them. You make sure you land those two guys, and dedicate the rest of your resources to your glaring weaknesses. Since you know what you're getting at QB now, you can make wiser decisions about receivers. You can probably get away with wideouts who are slow but who have great catching ability, since you have a QB that can thread the needle. If he's a blue chipper, that fullback should be able to catch as well. Your problems on offense are solved just like that! On defense, I can't tell you how important it is to have good defensive backs. Just like we saw in Madden 2001, if this is your weakness, there's no way to hide it. Solve this problem any way you can. I've had recruiting classes where I came away with seven safeties when all I needed was a couple of starting cornerbacks. This is college football, so you can convert a player into something that you need if you stick with it. Stud safeties make above average cornerbacks if you can get creative in your coaching.

– Guide by Chris Carle ∎

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2 (XBOX)

RIDER COMPETION OUTFITS

Dave Mirra	Right, Right, Up, Right, Down, Down, Left, Left, X button
Ryan Nyquist	Right, Right, Down, Down, Left, Up, Up, Down, X button
Troy McMurray	Right, Right, Left, Up, Left, Left, Up, Left, X button
Mike Laird	Right, Right, Right, Up, Down, Down, Up, Right, X button
Tim Mirra	Right, Right, Right, Down, Down, Right, Down, Up, X button
Kenan Harkin	Right, Right, Left, Down, Up, Left, Down, Down, X button
Leigh Ramsdell	Right, Right, Down, Left, Up, Down, Down, Left, X button
Joey Garcia	Right, Right, Up, Down, Up, Right, Down, Right, X button
Rick Moliterno	Right, Right, Up, Up, Up, Right, Left, Up, X button
Todd Lyons	Right, Right, Down, Left, Left, Up, Left, Down, X button
John Englebert	Right, Right, Left, Right, Up, Up, Left, Left, X button
Scott Wirch	Right, Right, Right, Up, Left, Left, Left, Right, X button
Colin Mackay	Right, Right, Right, Left, Right, Up, Right, Up, X button
Zach Shaw	Right, Right, Left, Left, Down, Down, Right, Down, X button

ALL BIKES

Dave Mirra	Down, Down, Up, Right, Up, Right, Up, Up, X button
Ryan Nyquist	Down, Down, Down, Down, Down, Right, Up, Down, X button
Troy McMurray	Down, Down, Left, Down, Right, Left, Up, Left, X button
Mike Laird	Down, Down, Right, Left, Down, Up, Up, Right, X button
Tim Mirra	Down, Down, Right, Left, Down, Right, Down, Up, X button
Kenan Harkin	Down, Down, Left, Up, Down, Right, Down, Down, X button
Leigh Ramsdell	Down, Down, Down, Up, Left, Left, Down, Left, X button
Joey Garcia	Down, Down, Up, Right, Left, Left, Down, Right, X button
Rick Moliterno	Down, Down, Up, Left, Right, Right, Left, Up, X button
Todd Lyons	Down, Down, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Down, X button
John Englebert	Down, Down, Left, Up, Left, Up, Left, Left, X button
Scott Wirch	Down, Down, Right, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, X button
Colin Mackay	Down, Down, Right, Right, Right, Right, Right Up, X button
Zach Shaw	Down, Down, Left, Down, Up, Right, Right, Down, X button

ALL LEVELS UNLOCKED

Dave Mirra	Up, Up, Up Right, Up Left, Up, Up, X button
Ryan Nyquist	Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Up, Down, X button
Troy McMurray	Up, Up, Left, Up, Up, Right, Up, Left, X button
Mike Laird	Up, Up, Right, Down, Down, Right, Up, Right, X button
Tim Mirra	Up, Up, Right, Down, Right, Left, Down, Up, X button
Kenan Harkin	Up, Up, Left, Left, Down, Up, Down, Down, X button
Leigh Ramsdell	Up, Up, Down, Up, Left, Down, Down Left, X button
Joey Garcia	Up, Up, Up, Up, Down, Down, Right, X button
Rick Moliterno	Up, Up, Up, Down, Right, Right, Left, Up, Sqaure
Todd Lyons	Up, Up, Down Up, Right, Right, Left, Down, X button
John Englebert	Up, Up, Left, Down, Right, Down, Left, Left, Sqaure
Scott Wirch	Up, Up, Right, Up, Left, Left, Left, Right, X button
Colin Mackay	Up, Up, Right, Left, Up, Right, Right, Up, X button
Zach Shaw	Up, Up, Left, Right, Down, Down, Right, Down, X button

ALL SIGNATURE TRICKS

Dave Mirra	Left, Right, Up, Up, Left, Right, Up, Up, X button
Ryan Nyquist	Left, Right, Down, Down, Down, Up, Up, Down, X button
Troy McMurray	Left, Right, Left, Left, Up, Down, Up, Left, X button
Mike Laird	Left, Right, Right, Right, Left, Right, Up, Right, X button

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2 (XBOX)

ALL SIGNATURE TRICKS (cont.)

Tim Mirra	Left, Right, Right, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, X button
Kenan Harkin	Left, Right, Left, Down, Up, Down, Down, Down X button
Leigh Ramsdell	Left, Right, Down, Left, Left, Right, Down, Left, X button
Joey Garcia	Left, Right, Up, Right, Down, Up, Down, Right, X button
Rick Moliterno	Left, Right, Up, Up, Up, Down, Left, Up, X button
Todd Lyons	Left, Right, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Down, X button
John Englebert	Left, Right, Left, Left, Down, Up, Left, Left, X button
Scott Wirch	Left, Right, Right, Right, Up, Down, Left, Right, X button
Colin Mackay	Left, Right, Right, Up, Left, Right, Right, Up, X button
Zach Shaw	Left, Right, Left, Down, Left, Up, Right, Down, X button
Slim Jim Guy	Left, Right, Down, Left, Up, Left, Right, Left, X button
Amish Air	Left, Right, Up, Up, Right, Down, Right, Right, X button

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X (XBOX)

Unlock THPS 2X Career
To unlock the Tony Hawk 2X levels, get Gold Medals in all three competitions in the THPS2 Career mode.

Unlock THPS1 Career
To unlock the original Tony Hawk Career mode, get a Gold Medal in the Tampa Bay competition in the THPS2X Career mode.

Unlock NY Subway Level
To unlock the NY Subway Level, get every single Tape in the THPS1 Career levels.

Unlock Spider-Man
To unlock Spider-Man, beat the THPS2 Career Mode with 100% on all levels with a created skater.

Unlock Officer Dick
To unlock Officer Dick, beat the THPS2 Career Mode with 100% on all levels with any skater (besides the created skater).

TransWorld Surf (XBOX)

No HUD
To turn off the heads up display, enter the following code: BACK, D-UP, D-DOWN, D-LEFT, D-RIGHT, D-UP, D-RIGHT.

Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader (GameCube)

30 Points, All Secret Missions
Secret missions can be bought with medal points -- 30 points per mission. Save your points by pulling out the memory card before you buy. This way you'll always have at least 30 points.

Issue #8 Parting Shot ::

Can't We All Just Get Along? ::

Awwwww...ain't that sweet. Xbox and GameCube sittin' in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G.

We know a lot of you so-called "fanboys" whose parents have instilled in them only enough love for one gaming system. This assumes of course that they aren't foolishly wasting love on the other people in their lives. Well we're here to tell you something -- if you only show dedication to one system, you're a chump, and you're missing out on some great games for other systems.

Variety is the spice of life, so live a little spicier! Would you be happy just eating one kind of food all your life? How about only using one kind of toilet paper? How about eating only one kind of toilet paper? Hell no, so why would you limit yourself to only one gaming system?

Remember, system specs don't make good games, good developers make good games. So love all systems equally, and leave the hate for the craptastic games.

Unplugged's Special Thanks This Month ::

Thanks to the editors for getting their crap in on time...for the most part. Also a BIG thanks to Peer and Tal for helping create a more effecient way of doing the mag. Lastly, a special thanks to Scotty Agrella, Scott Senkowski, and Mike Hawkins from the design team for all their hard work over the past year. They will be missed. *-- Scott Allen*

igninsider
Roundtable

All ye members are called forth-with to readith the weekly grand debate-ist on thus exclusive *igninsider!*

"Peer, you ignorant slut..."

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